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A SUMMER IN SKYE

~~571~~ J.

By ALEXANDER SMITH
AUTHOR OF "A LIFE DRAMA," ETC.

VOLUME I.

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A SUMMER IN SKYE.

EDINBURGH.

SUMMER has leaped suddenly on Edinburgh like a tiger. The air is still and hot above the houses; but every now and then a breath of east wind startles you through the warm sunshine—like a sudden sarcasm felt through a strain of flattery—and passes on detested of every organism. But, with this exception, the atmosphere is so close, so laden with a body of heat, that a thunderstorm would be almost welcomed as a relief. Edinburgh, on her crags, held high towards the sun—too distant the sea to send cool breezes to street and square—is at this moment an uncomfortable dwelling-place. Beautiful as ever, of course—for nothing can be finer than the ridge

of the Old Town etched on hot summer azure—but close, breathless, suffocating. Great volumes of white smoke surge out of the railway station; great choking puffs of dust issue from the houses and shops that are being gutted in Princes Street. The Castle rock is gray; the trees are of a dingy olive; languid "swells," arm-in-arm, promenade uneasily the heated pavement; water-carts everywhere dispense their treasures; and the only human being really to be envied in the city is the small boy who, with trousers tucked up, and unheeding of maternal vengeance, marches coolly in the fringe of the ambulating shower-bath. Oh for one hour of heavy rain! Thereafter would the heavens wear a clear and tender, instead of a dim and sultry hue. Then would the Castle rock brighten in colour, and the trees and grassy slopes doff their dingy olives for the emeralds of April. Then would the streets be cooled, and the dust be allayed. Then would the belts of city verdure, refreshed, pour forth gratitude in balmy smells; and Fife—low-lying across the Forth—break from its hot neutral tint into the greens, purples, and yellows that of right belong to it. But rain won't

come; and for weeks, perhaps, there will be nothing but hot sun above, and hot street beneath; and for the respiration of poor human lungs an atmosphere of heated dust, tempered with east wind.

Moreover, one is tired and jaded. The whole man, body and soul, like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, and harsh, is fagged with work, eaten up of impatience, and haunted with visions of vacation. One "babbles o' green fields," like a very Falstaff; and the poor tired ears hum with sea-music like a couple of sea-shells. At last it comes, the 1st of August, and then—like an arrow from a Tartar's bow, like a bird from its cage, like a lover to his mistress—one is off; and before the wild scarlets of sunset die on the northern sea, one is in the silence of the hills, those eternal sun-dials that tell the hours to the shepherd, and in one's nostrils is the smell of peat-reek, and in one's throat the flavour of usquebaugh. Then come long floating summer days, so silent the wilderness, that one can hear one's heart beat; then come long silent nights, the waves heard upon the shore, although *that* is a mile away, in which one snatches the "fearful joy"

of a ghost story, told by shepherd or fisher, who believes in it as in his own existence. Then one beholds sunset, not through the smoked glass of towns, but gloriously through the clearness of enkindled air. Then one makes acquaintance with sunrise, which to the dweller in a city, who conforms to the usual proprieties, is about the rarest of this world's sights.

Mr De Quincey maintains, in one of his essays, that dinner—dinner about seven in the evening, for which one dresses, which creeps on with multitudinous courses and *entrées*, which, so far from being a gross satisfaction of appetite, is a feast noble, graceful, adorned with the presence and smile of beauty, and which, from the very stateliness of its progress, gives opportunities for conversation and the encounter of polished minds—saves over-wrought London from insanity. This is no mere humorous exaggeration, but a very truth; and what dinner is to the day the Highlands are to the year. Away in the north, amid its green or stony silences, jaded hand and brain find repose—repose, the depth and intensity of which the idler can

never know. In that blessed idleness you become in a strange way acquainted with yourself; for in the world you are too constantly occupied to spend much time in your own company. You live abroad all day, as it were, and only come home to sleep. Away in the north you have nothing else to do, and cannot quite help yourself; and conscience, who has kept open a watchful eye, although her lips have been sealed these many months, gets disagreeably communicative, and tells her mind pretty freely about certain little shabby selfishnesses and unmanly violences of temper, which you had quietly consigned — like a document which you were for ever done with — to the waste-basket of forgetfulness. And the quiet, the silence, the rest, is not only good for the soul, it is good for the body too. You flourish like a flower in the open air; the hurried pulse beats a wholesome measure; evil dreams roll off your slumbers; indigestion dies. During your two months' vacation, you amass a fund of superfluous health, and can draw on it during the ten months that succeed. And in going to the north, and wandering about the north, it is best to take every-

thing quietly and in moderation. It is better to read one good book leisurely, lingering over the finer passages, returning frequently on an exquisite sentence, closing the volume, now and then, to run down in your own mind a new thought started by its perusal, than to rush in a swift perfunctory manner through half a library. It is better to sit down to dinner in a moderate frame of mind, to please the palate as well as satisfy the appetite, to educe the sweet juices of meats by sufficient mastication, to make your glass of port "a linked sweetness long drawn out," than to bolt everything like a leathern-faced Yankee for whom the cars are waiting, and who fears that before he has had his money's worth, he will be summoned by the railway bell. And shall one, who wishes to extract from the world as much enjoyment as his nature will allow him, treat the Highlands less respectfully than he will his dinner? So at least will not I. My bourne is the island of which Douglas dreamed on the morning of Otterburn; but even to *it* I will not unnecessarily hurry, but will look on many places on my way. You have to go to London; but unless your business is urgent, you are a

fool to go thither like a parcel in the night train and miss York and Peterborough. It is very fine to arrive at majority, and the management of your fortune which has been all the while accumulating for years; but you do not wish to do so at a sudden leap—to miss the April eyes and April heart of seventeen!

The Highlands can be enjoyed in the utmost simplicity; and the best preparations are—money to a moderate extent in one's pocket, a knapsack containing a spare shirt and a toothbrush, and a courage that does not fear to breast the steep of the hill, and to encounter the pelting of a Highland shower. No man knows a country till he has walked through it; he then tastes the sweets and the bitters of it. He beholds its grand and important points, and all the subtler and concealed beauties that lie out of the beaten track. Then, O reader, in the most glorious of the months, the very crown and summit of the fruitful year, hanging in equal poise between summer and autumn, leave London or Edinburgh, or whatever city your lot may happen to be cast in, and accompany me on my wanderings. Our course will

lead us by ancient battle-fields, by castles standing in hearing of the surge; by the bases of mighty mountains, along the wanderings of hollow glens; and if the weather holds, we may see the keen ridges of Blaavin and the Cuchullin hills; listen to a legend old as Ossian, while sitting on the broken stair of the castle of Duntulm, beaten for centuries by the salt flake and the wind; and in the pauses of ghostly talk in the long autumn nights, when the rain is on the hills, we may hear—more wonderful than any legend, carrying you away to misty regions and half-forgotten times—the music which haunted the Berserkers of old, the thunder of the northern sea!

A perfect library of books has been written about Edinburgh. Defoe, in his own matter-of-fact, garrulous way, has described the city. Its towering streets, and the follies of its society, are reflected in the inimitable pages of "Humphrey Clinker." Certain aspects of city life, city amusements, city dissipations, are mirrored in the clear, although somewhat shallow, stream of Fergusson's humour. The old life of

the place, the traffic in the streets, the old-fashioned shops, the citizens with cocked hats and powdered hair, with hospitable paunches and double chins, with no end of wrinkles, and hints of latent humour in their worldly-wise faces, with gold-headed sticks, and shapely limbs encased in close-fitting small-clothes, are found in "Kay's Portraits." Passing Scott's other services to the city—the magnificent description in "Marmion," the "high jinks" in "Guy Mannering," the broils of the nobles and wild chieftains who attended the Court of the Jameses in "The Abbot"—he has, in "The Heart of Mid-Lothian," made immortal many of the city localities; and the central character of Jeanie Deans is so unassumingly and sweetly *Scotch*, that she seems as much a portion of the place as Holyrood, the Castle, or the Crags. In Lockhart's "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk," we have sketches of society nearer our own time, when the *Edinburgh Review* flourished, when the city was really the Modern Athens, and a seat of criticism giving laws to the empire. In these pages, we are introduced to Jeffrey, to John Wilson, the Ettrick Shepherd, and Dr

Chalmers. Then came *Blackwood's Magazine*, the "Chaldee Manuscript," the "Noctes," and "Margaret Lindsay." Then the "Traditions of Edinburgh," by Mr Robert Chambers ; thereafter the well-known *Edinburgh Journal*. Since then we have had Lord Cockburn's chatty "Memorials of his Time." Almost the other day we had Dean Ramsay's Lectures, filled with pleasant antiquarianism, and information relative to the men and women who flourished half a century ago. And the list may be closed with "Edinburgh Dissected," written after the fashion of Lockhart's "Letters,"—a book containing pleasant reading enough, although it wants the brilliancy, the acuteness, the eloquence, and possesses all the ill-nature, of its famous prototype.

Scott has done more for Edinburgh than all her great men put together. Burns has hardly left a trace of himself in the northern capital. During his residence there his spirit was soured, and he was taught to drink whisky-punch—obligations which he repaid by addressing "Edina, Scotia's darling seat," in a copy of his tamest verses. Scott discovered that the city was beautiful—he sang its

praises over the world—and he has put more coin into the pockets of its inhabitants than if he had established a branch of manufacture of which they had the monopoly. Scott's novels were to Edinburgh what the tobacco trade was to Glasgow about the close of the last century. Although several labourers were before him in the field of the Border Ballads, he made fashionable those wonderful stories of humour and pathos. As soon as "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" appeared, everybody was raving about Melrose and moonlight. He wrote "The Lady of the Lake," and next year a thousand tourists descended on the Trosachs, watched the sun setting on Loch Katrine, and began to take lessons on the bagpipe. He improved the Highlands as much as General Wade did when he struck through them his military roads. Where his muse was one year, a mail-coach and a hotel were the next. His poems are grated down into guide-books. Never was an author so popular as Scott, and never was popularity worn so lightly and gracefully. In his own heart he did not value it highly; and he cared more for his plan-

tations at Abbotsford than for his poems and novels. He would rather have been praised by Tom Purdie than by any critic. He was a great, simple, sincere, warm-hearted man. He never turned aside from his fellows in gloomy scorn; his lip never curled with a fine disdain. He never ground his teeth save when in the agonies of toothache. He liked society, his friends, his dogs, his domestics, his trees, his historical nick-nacks. At Abbotsford, he would write a chapter of a novel before his guests were out of bed, spend the day with them, and then, at dinner, with his store of shrewd Scottish anecdote, brighten the table more than did the champagne. When in Edinburgh, any one might see him in the streets or in the Parliament House. He was loved by everybody. No one so popular among the souters of Selkirk as the *Shirra*. George IV., on his visit to the northern kingdom, declared that Scott was the man he most wished to see. He was the deepest, simplest, man of his time. The mass of his greatness takes away from our sense of its height. He sinks like Ben Cruachan, shoulder after

shoulder, slowly, till its base is twenty miles in girth. Scotland is Scott-land. He is the light in which it is seen. He has proclaimed over all the world Scottish story, Scottish humour, Scottish feeling, Scottish virtue; and he has put money into the pockets of Scottish hotel-keepers, Scottish tailors, Scottish boatmen, and the drivers of the Highland mails.

Every true Scotsman believes Edinburgh to be the most picturesque city in the world; and truly, standing on the Calton Hill at early morning, when the smoke of fires newly-kindled hangs in azure swathes and veils about the Old Town—which from that point resembles a huge lizard, the Castle its head, church-spires spikes upon its scaly back, creeping up from its lair beneath the Crags to look out on the morning world—one is quite inclined to pardon the enthusiasm of the North Briton. The finest view from the interior is obtained from the corner of St Andrew Street, looking west. Straight before you the Mound crosses the valley, bearing the white Academy buildings; beyond, the Castle lifts, from grassy slopes and billows of summer foliage, its weather-stained towers

and fortifications, the Half-Moon battery giving the folds of its standard to the wind. Living in Edinburgh there abides, above all things, a sense of its beauty. Hill, crag, castle, rock, blue stretch of sea, the picturesque ridge of the Old Town, the squares and terraces of the New—these things seen once are not to be forgotten. The quick life of to-day sounding around the relics of antiquity, and overshadowed by the august traditions of a kingdom, makes residence in Edinburgh more impressive than residence in any other British city. I have just come in—surely it never looked so fair before? What a poem is that Princes Street! The puppets of the busy, many-coloured hour move about on its pavement, while across the ravine Time has piled up the Old Town, ridge on ridge, gray as a rocky coast washed and worn by the foam of centuries; peaked and jagged by gable and roof; windowed from basement to cope; the whole surmounted by St Giles's airy crown. The New is there looking at the Old. Two Times are brought face to face, and are yet separated by a thousand years. Wonderful on winter nights, when the gully is filled with darkness, and out of

it rises, against the sombre blue and the frosty stars, that mass and bulwark of gloom, pierced and quivering with innumerable lights. There is nothing in Europe to match that, I think. Could you but roll a river down the valley it would be sublime. Finer still, to place one's-self near the Burns Monument and look toward the Castle. It is more astonishing than an Eastern dream. A city rises up before you painted by fire on night. High in air a bridge of lights leaps the chasm ; a few emerald lamps, like glow-worms, are moving silently about in the railway station below ; a solitary crimson one is at rest. That ridged and chimneyed bulk of blackness, with splendour bursting out at every pore, is the wonderful Old Town, where Scottish history mainly transacted itself ; while, opposite, the modern Princes Street is blazing throughout its length. During the day the Castle looks down upon the city as if out of another world ; stern with all its peacefulness, its garniture of trees, its slopes of grass. The rock is dingy enough in colour, but after a shower, its lichens laugh out greenly in the returning sun, while the rainbow is brightening on the lowering sky beyond. How

deep the shadow which the Castle throws at noon over the gardens at its feet where the children play! How grand when giant bulk and towery crown blacken against sunset! Fair, too, the New Town sloping to the sea. From George Street, which crowns the ridge, the eye is led down sweeping streets of stately architecture to the villas and woods that fill the lower ground, and fringe the shore; to the bright azure belt of the Forth with its smoking steamer or its creeping sail; beyond, to the shores of Fife, soft blue, and flecked with fleeting shadows in the keen clear light of spring, dark purple in the summer heat, tarnished gold in the autumn haze; and farther away still, just distinguishable on the paler sky, the crest of some distant peak, carrying the imagination into the illimitable world. Residence in Edinburgh is an education in itself. Its beauty refines one like being in love. It is perennial, like a play of Shakespeare's. Nothing can stale its infinite variety.

From a historical and picturesque point of view, the Old Town is the most interesting part of Edinburgh; and the great street running from Holyrood to the Castle—in various portions of its

length called the Lawnmarket, the High Street, and the Canongate—is the most interesting part of the Old Town. In that street the houses preserve their ancient appearance; they climb up heavenward, story upon story, with outside stairs and wooden panellings, all strangely peaked and gabled. With the exception of the inhabitants, who exist amidst squalor, and filth, and evil smells undeniably modern, everything in this long street breathes of the antique world. If you penetrate the narrow wynds that run at right angles from it, you see traces of ancient gardens. Occasionally the original names are retained, and they touch the visitor pathetically, like the scent of long-withered flowers. Old armorial bearings may yet be traced above the doorways. Two centuries ago fair eyes looked down from yonder window, now in possession of a drunken Irishwoman. If we but knew it, every crazy tenement has its tragic story; every crumbling wall could its tale unfold. The Canongate is Scottish history fossilised. What ghosts of kings and queens walk there! What strifes of steel-clad nobles! What wretches borne along, in the sight of peopled windows, to the grim embrace of the

"maiden!" What hurrying of burgesses to man the city walls at the approach of the Southron! What lamentations over disastrous battle days! James rode up this street on his way to Flodden. Montrose was dragged up hither on a hurdle, and smote, with disdainful glance, his foes gathered together on the balcony. Jenny Geddes flung her stool at the priest in the church yonder. John Knox came up here to his house after his interview with Mary at Holyrood—grim and stern, and unmelted by the tears of a queen. In later days the Pretender rode down the Canongate, his eyes dazzled by the glitter of his father's crown, while bagpipes skirled around, and Jacobite ladies, with white knots in their bosoms, looked down from lofty windows, admiring the beauty of the "Young Ascanius," and his long yellow hair. Down here of an evening rode Dr Johnson and Boswell, and turned in to the White Horse. David Hume had his dwelling in this street, and trod its pavements, much meditating the wars of the Roses and the Parliament, and the fates of English sovereigns. One day a burly ploughman from Ayrshire, with swarthy features and wonderful

black eyes, came down here and turned into yonder churchyard to stand, with cloudy lids and forehead reverently bared, beside the grave of poor Fergusson. Down the street, too, often limped a little boy, Walter Scott by name, destined in after years to write its "Chronicles." The Canongate once seen is never to be forgotten. The visitor starts a ghost at every step. Nobles, grave senators, jovial lawyers, had once their abodes here. In the old, low-roofed rooms, half-way to the stars, philosophers talked, wits corruscated, and gallant young fellows, sowing wild oats in the middle of last century, wore rapiers and lace ruffles, and drank claret jovially out of silver stoups. In every room a minuet has been walked, while chairmen and linkmen clustered on the pavement beneath. But the Canongate has fallen from its high estate. Quite another race of people are its present inhabitants. The vices to be seen are not genteel. Whisky has supplanted claret. Nobility has fled, and squalor taken possession. Wild, half-naked children swarm around every door-step. Ruffians lounge about the mouths of the wynds. Female faces, worthy of the "Inferno," look down from

broken windows. Riots are frequent; and drunken mothers reel past scolding white atomies of children that nestle wailing in their bosoms—little wretches to whom Death were the greatest benefactor. The Canongate is avoided by respectable people, and yet it has many visitors. The tourist is anxious to make acquaintance with it. Gentlemen of obtuse olfactory nerve, and of an antiquarian turn of mind, go down its closes and climb its spiral stairs. Deep down these wynds the artist pitches his stool, and spends the day sketching some picturesque gable or doorway. The fever-van comes frequently here to convey some poor sufferer to the hospital. Hither comes the detective in plain clothes on the scent of a burglar. And when evening falls, and the lamps are lit, there is a sudden hubbub and crowd of people, and presently from its midst emerge a couple of policemen and a barrow with a poor, half-clad, tipsy woman from the sister island crouching upon it, her hair hanging loose about her face, her hands quivering with impotent rage, and her tongue wild with curses. Attended by small boys, who bait her with taunts and nicknames,

and who appreciate the comic element which so strangely underlies the horrible sight, she is conveyed to the police cell, and will be brought before the magistrate to-morrow—for the twentieth time perhaps—as a "drunk and disorderly," and dealt with accordingly. This is the kind of life the Canongate presents to-day—a contrast with the time when the tall buildings enclosed the high birth and beauty of a kingdom, and when the street beneath rang to the horse-hoofs of a king.

The New Town is divided from the Old by a gorge or valley, now occupied by a railway station; and the means of communication are the Mound, Waverley Bridge, and the North Bridge. With the exception of the Canongate, the more filthy and tumble-down portions of the city are well kept out of sight. You stand on the South Bridge, and looking down, instead of a stream, you see the Cowgate, the dirtiest, narrowest, most densely peopled of Edinburgh streets. Admired once by a French ambassador at the court of one of the Jameses, and yet with certain traces of departed splendour, the Cowgate has fallen into the sere and yellow leaf of furniture brokers, second-hand jewellers, and ven-

dors of deleterious alcohol. These second-hand jewellers' shops, the trinkets seen by bleared gas-light, are the most melancholy sights I know. Watches hang there that once ticked comfortably in the fobs of prosperous men, rings that were once placed by happy bridegrooms on the fingers of happy brides, jewels in which lives the sacredness of death-beds. What tragedies, what disruptions of households, what fell pressure of poverty brought them here! Looking in through the foul windows, the trinkets remind one of shipwrecked gold embedded in the ooze of ocean—gold that speaks of unknown, yet certain, storm and disaster, of the yielding of planks, of the cry of drowning men. Who has the heart to buy them, I wonder? The Cowgate is the Irish portion of the city. Edinburgh leaps over it with bridges; its inhabitants are morally and geographically the lower orders. They keep to their own quarters, and seldom come up to the light of day. Many an Edinburgh man has never set his foot in the street; the condition of the inhabitants is as little known to respectable Edinburgh as are the habits of moles, earth-worms, and the mining population. The people of the

Cowgate seldom visit the upper streets. You may walk about the New Town for a twelvemonth before one of these Cowgate pariahs comes between the wind and your gentility. Should you wish to see that strange people "at home," you must visit them. The Cowgate will not come to you: you must go to the Cowgate. The Cowgate holds high drunken carnival every Saturday night; and to walk along it then, from the West Port, through the noble open space of the Grassmarket—where the Covenanters and Captain Porteous suffered—on to Holyrood, is one of the world's sights, and one that does not particularly raise your estimate of human nature. For nights after your dreams will pass from brawl to brawl, shoals of hideous faces will oppress you, sodden countenances of brutal men, women with loud voices and frantic gesticulations, children who have never known innocence. It is amazing of what ugliness the human face is capable. The devil marks his children as a shepherd marks his sheep—that he may know them and claim them again. Many a face flits past here bearing the sign-manual of the fiend.

But Edinburgh keeps all these evil things out

of sight, and smiles, with Castle, tower, church-spire, and pyramid rising into sunlight out of garden spaces and belts of foliage. The Cowgate has no power to mar her beauty. There may be a canker at the heart of the peach—there is neither pit nor stain on its dusty velvet. Throned on crags, Edinburgh takes every eye; and, not content with supremacy in beauty, she claims an intellectual supremacy also. She is a patrician amongst British cities, "A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree." She has wit if she lacks wealth: she counts great men against millionaires. The success of the actor is insecure until thereunto Edinburgh has set her seal. The poet trembles before the Edinburgh critics. The singer respects the delicacy of the Edinburgh ear. Coarse London may roar with applause: fastidious Edinburgh sniffs disdain, and sneers reputations away. London is the stomach of the empire—Edinburgh the quick, subtle, far-darting brain. Some pretension of this kind the visitor hears on all sides of him. It is quite wonderful how Edinburgh purrs over her own literary achievements. Swift, in the dark years that preceded his death, looking one day

over some of the productions of his prime, exclaimed, "Good heaven! what a genius I once was!" Edinburgh, looking some fifty years back on herself, is perpetually expressing astonishment and delight. Mouldering Highland families, when they are unable to retain a sufficient following of servants, fill up the gaps with *ghosts*. Edinburgh maintains her dignity after a similar fashion, and for a similar reason. Lord-Advocate Moncreiff, one of the members for the city, hardly ever addresses his fellow-citizens without recalling the names of Jeffrey, Cockburn, Rutherfurd, and the other stars that of yore made the welkin bright. On every side we hear of the brilliant society of forty years ago. Edinburgh considers herself supreme in talent—just as it is taken for granted to-day that the present English navy is the most powerful in the world, because Nelson won Trafalgar. The Whigs consider the *Edinburgh Review* the most wonderful effort of human genius. The Tories would agree with them, if they were not bound to consider *Blackwood's Magazine* a still greater effort. It may be said that Burns, Scott, and Carlyle are the only men really great in litera-

ture—taking *great* in a European sense—who, during the last eighty years, have been connected with Edinburgh. I do not include Wilson in the list; for although he was as splendid as any of these for the moment, he was evanescent as a Northern light. In the whole man there was something spectacular. A review is superficially very like a battle. In both there is the rattle of musketry, the boom of great guns, the deploying of endless brigades, charges of brazen squadrons that shake the ground—only the battle changes kingdoms, while the review is gone with its own smoke-wreaths. Scott lived in or near Edinburgh during the whole course of his life. Burns lived there but a few months. Carlyle went to London early, where he has written his important works, and made his reputation. Let the city boast of Scott—no one will say she does wrong in that—but it is not so easy to discover the amazing brilliancy of her other literary lights. Their reputations, after all, are to a great extent local. What blazes a sun at Edinburgh, would, if transported to London, not unfrequently become a farthing candle. Lord Jeffrey —when shall we cease to hear his praises? With

perfect truthfulness one may admit that his lordship was no common man. His "vision" was sharp and clear enough within its range. He was unable to relish certain literary forms, as some men are unable to relish certain dishes—an inaptitude that might arise from fastidiousness of palate, or from weakness of digestion. His style was perspicuous; he had an icy sparkle of epigram and antithesis, some wit, and no enthusiasm. He wrote many clever papers, made many clever speeches, said many clever things. But the man who could so egregiously blunder as to "Wilhelm Meister," who hooted Wordsworth through his entire career, who had the insolence to pen the sentence that opens the notice of the "Excursion" in the *Edinburgh Review*, and who, when writing tardily, but really well, on Keats, could pass over the "Hyperion" with a slighting remark, might be possessed of distinguished parts, but no claim can be made for him to the character of a great critic. Hazlitt, wilful, passionate, splendidly-gifted, in whose very eccentricities and fierce vagaries there was a generosity which belongs only to fine natures, has sunk away into an almost unknown

London grave, and his works into unmerited oblivion; while Lord Jeffrey yet makes radiant with his memory the city of his birth. In point of natural gifts and endowment — in point, too, of literary issue and result — the Englishman far surpassed the Scot. Why have their destinies been so different? One considerable reason is that Hazlitt lived in London—Jeffrey in Edinburgh. Hazlitt was partially lost in an impatient crowd and rush of talent. Jeffrey stood, patent to every eye, in an open space in which there were few competitors. London does not brag about Hazlitt — Edinburgh brags about Jeffrey. The Londoner, when he visits Edinburgh, is astonished to find that it possesses a Valhalla filled with gods — chiefly legal ones — of whose names and deeds he was previously in ignorance. The ground breaks into unexpected flowerage beneath his feet. He may conceive to-day to be a little cloudy—may even suspect east wind to be abroad—but the discomfort is balanced by the reports he hears on every side of the beauty, warmth, and splendour of yesterday. He puts out his hands and warms them, if he can,

at that fire of the past. "Ah! that society of forty years ago! Never on this earth did the like exist. Those astonishing men, Horner, Jeffrey, Cockburn, Rutherfurd! What wit was theirs—what eloquence, what genius! What a city this Edinburgh once was!"

Edinburgh is not only in point of beauty the first of British cities—but, considering its population, the general tone of its society is more intellectual than that of any other. In no other city will you find so general an appreciation of books, art, music, and objects of antiquarian interest. It is peculiarly free from the taint of the ledger and the counting-house. It is a Weimar without a Goethe—Boston without its nasal twang. But it wants variety; it is mainly a city of the professions. London, for instance, contains every class of people; it is the seat of legislature as well as of wealth; it embraces Seven Dials as well as Belgravia. In that vast community class melts imperceptibly into class, from the Sovereign on the throne to the wretch in the condemned cell. In that finely-graduated scale, the professions take their own place. In Edinburgh matters are quite different. It re-

tains the gauds which royalty cast off when it went South, and takes a melancholy pleasure in regarding these—as a lady the love-tokens of a lover who has deserted her to marry into a family of higher rank. A crown and sceptre lie up in the Castle, but no brow wears the diadem, no hand lifts the golden rod. There is a palace at the foot of the Canongate, but it is a hotel for her Majesty, *en route* for Balmoral—a place where the Commissioner to the Church of Scotland holds his phantom Court. With these exceptions, the old halls echo only the footfalls of the tourist and sight-seer. When royalty went to London, nobility followed ; and in Edinburgh the field is left now, and has been so left for a long time back, to Law, Physic, and Divinity. The professions predominate : than these there is nothing higher. At Edinburgh a Lord of Session is a Prince of the Blood, a Professor a Cabinet Minister, an Advocate an heir to a peerage. The University and the Courts of Justice are to Edinburgh what the Court and the Houses of Lords and Commons are to London. That the Scottish nobility should spend their seasons in London is not

to be regretted for the sake of Edinburgh shopkeepers only—their absence affects interests infinitely higher. In the event of a superabundance of princes, and a difficulty as to what should be done with them, it has been frequently suggested that one should be stationed in Dublin, another in Edinburgh, to hold Court in these cities. Gold is everywhere preferred to paper; and in the Irish capital royalty in the person of Prince Patrick would be more satisfactory than its shadow in the person of a Lord-Lieutenant. A Prince of the Blood in Dublin would be gratefully received by the warm-hearted Irish people. His permanent presence amongst them would cancel the remembrance of centuries of misgovernment; it would strike away for ever the badge and collar of conquest. In Edinburgh we have *had* princes of late years, and seen the uses of them. A prince at Holyrood would effect for the country what Scottish Rights' Associations and University reformers have so long desired. The nobility would again gather—for a portion of the year at least—to their ancient capital; and their sons, as of old, would be found in the University class-rooms. Under the new influ-

ence, life would be gayer, airier, brighter. The social tyranny of the professions would to some extent be broken up, the atmosphere would become less legal, and a new standard would be introduced whereby to measure men and their pretensions. For the Prince himself, good results might be expected. He would at the least have some specific public duties to perform; and he would, through intercourse, become attached to the people, as the people in their turn would become attached to him. Edinburgh needs some little gaiety and courtly pomp to break the coldness of gray stony streets; to brighten a somewhat sombre atmosphere; to mollify the east wind that blows half the year, and the "professional sectarianism" that blows the whole year round. You always suspect the east wind, somehow, in the city. You go to dinner: the east wind is blowing chillily from hostess to host. You go to church, a bitter east wind is blowing in the sermon. The text is that divine one, GOD IS LOVE; and the discourse that follows is full of all uncharitableness.

Of all British cities, Edinburgh—Weimar-like in its intellectual and æsthetic leanings, Florence-like

in its freedom from the stains of trade, and more than Florence-like in its beauty—is the one best suited for the conduct of a lettered life. The city as an entity does not stimulate like London, the present moment is not nearly so intense, life does not roar and chafe—it murmurs only; and this interest of the hour, mingled with something of the quietude of distance and the past—which is the spiritual atmosphere of the city—is the most favourable of all conditions for intellectual work or intellectual enjoyment. You have libraries—you have the society of cultivated men and women—you have the eye constantly fed by beauty—the Old Town, jagged, picturesque, piled up; and the airy, open, coldly-sunny, unhurried, uncrowded streets of the New Town—and, above all, you can "sport your oak," as they say at Cambridge, and be quit of the world, the gossip, and the dun. In Edinburgh, you do not require to create quiet for yourself; you can have it ready-made. Life is leisurely; but it is not the leisure of a village, arising from a deficiency of ideas and motives — it is the leisure of a city reposing grandly on tradition and history, which has

done its work, which does not require to weave its own clothing, to dig its own coals, to smelt its own iron. And then, in Edinburgh, above all British cities, you are released from the vulgarising dominion of the hour. The past confronts you at every street corner. The Castle looks down out of history on its gayest thoroughfare. The winds of fable are blowing across Arthur's Seat. Old kings dwelt in Holyrood. Go out of the city where you will, the past attends you like a cicerone. Go down to North Berwick, and the red shell of Tantallon speaks to you of the might of the Douglases. Across the sea, from the gray-green Bass, through a cloud of gannets, comes the sigh of prisoners. From the long sea-board of Fife—which you can see from George Street—starts a remembrance of the Jameses. Queen Mary is at Craigmillar, Napier at Merchiston, Ben Jonson and Drummond at Hawthornden, Prince Charles in the little inn at Duddingston; and if you go out to Linlithgow, there is the smoke of Bothwellhaugh's fusee, and the Great Regent falling in the crooked street. Thus the past checkmates the present. To an imaginative man, life in or near

Edinburgh is like residence in an old castle:—the rooms are furnished in consonance with modern taste and convenience; the people who move about wear modern costume, and talk of current events in current colloquial phrases; there is the last newspaper and book in the library, the air from the last new opera in the drawing-room; but while the hour flies past, a subtle influence enters into it—enriching, dignifying—from oak panelling and carvings on the roof—from the picture of the peaked-bearded ancestor on the wall—from the picture of the fanned and hooped lady—from the old suit of armour and the moth-eaten banner. On the intellectual man, living or working in Edinburgh, the light comes through the stained window of the past. To-day's event is not raw and *brusque;* it comes draped in romantic colour, hued with ancient gules and or. And when he has done his six hours' work, he can take the noblest and most renovating exercise. He can throw down his pen, put aside his papers, and walk round the Queen's Drive, where the wind from the sea is always fresh and keen; and in his hour's walk he has wonderful variety of scenery—the fat Lothians—the

craggy hillside—the valley, which seems a bit of the Highlands—the wide sea, with smoky towns on its margin, and islands on its bosom—lakes with swans and rushes—ruins of castle, palace, and chapel—and, finally, homeward by the high towering street through which Scottish history has rushed like a stream. There is no such hour's walk as this for starting ideas, or, having started, captured, and used them, for getting quit of them again.

Edinburgh is at this moment in the full blaze of her beauty. The public gardens are in blossom. The trees that clothe the base of the Castle rock are clad in green: the "ridgy back" of the Old Town jags the clear azure. Princes Street is warm and sunny—'tis a very flower-bed of parasols, twinkling, rainbow-coloured. Shop windows are enchantment, the flag streams from the Half-moon Battery, church-spires sparkle sun-gilt, gay equipages dash past, the military band is heard from afar. The tourist is already here in wonderful Tweed costume. Every week the wanderers increase, and in a short time the city will be theirs. By August the inhabitants have fled. The University lets loose, on unoffending humanity, a

horde of juvenile M.D.'s warranted to dispense—with the sixth commandment. Beauty listens to what the wild waves are saying. Valour cruises in the Mediterranean; and Law, up to the knees in heather, stalks his stag on the slopes of Ben-Muich-dhui. Those who, from private and most urgent reasons, are forced to remain behind, put brown paper in their front windows; inform the world by placard that letters and parcels may be left at No. 26 round the corner, and live fashionably in their back-parlours. At twilight only do they adventure forth; and if they meet a friend—who ought like the rest of the world to be miles away—they have only of course come up from the sea-side, or their relation's shooting-box, for a night, to look after some imperative business. Tweed-clad tourists are everywhere: they stand on Arthur's Seat, they speculate on the birthplace of Mons Meg, they admire Roslin, eat haggis, attempt whisky-punch, and crowd to Dr Guthrie's church on Sundays. By October the last tourist has departed, and the first student has arrived. Tailors put forth their gaudiest fabrics to attract the eye of ingenuous youth. Whole streets bristle with

"lodgings to let." Edinburgh is again filled. The University class-rooms are crowded; a hundred schools are busy; and Young Briefless,

"Who never is, but always to be, fee'd,"

the sun-brown yet on his face, paces the floor of the Parliament House, four hours a day, in his professional finery of horse-hair and bombazine. During the winter-time are assemblies and dinner-parties. There is a fortnight's opera, with the entire fashionable world in the boxes. The Philosophical Institution is in full session; while a whole army of eloquent lecturers do battle with ignorance on public platforms—each effulging like Phœbus, with his waggon-load of blazing day—at whose coming night perishes, shot through with orient beams. Neither mind nor body is neglected during the Edinburgh season.

In spring time, when the east winds blow, and grey walls of *haar*—clammy, stinging, heaven-high, making disastrous twilight of the brightest noon—come in from the German Ocean, and when coughs and colds do most abound, the Royal Scottish Academy opens her many-pictured walls.

From February to May this is the most fashionable lounge in Edinburgh. The rooms are warm, so thickly carpeted that no footfall is heard, and there are seats in abundance. It is quite wonderful how many young ladies and gentlemen get suddenly interested in art. The Exhibition is a charming place for flirtation; and when Romeo is short in the matter of small talk—as Romeo sometimes will be—there is always a picture at hand to suggest a topic. Romeo may say a world of pretty things while he turns up the number of a picture in Juliet's catalogue—for without a catalogue Juliet never appears in the rooms. Before the season closes, she has her catalogue by heart, and could repeat it to you from beginning to end more glibly than she could her Catechism. Cupid never dies; and fingers will tingle as sweetly when they touch over an Exhibition catalogue as over the dangerous pages of "Lancelot of the Lake." If many marriages are not made here, there are gay deceivers in the world, and the picture of deserted Ophelia—the blank smile on her mouth, flowerets stuck in her yellow hair—slowly sinking in the weedy pool, produces no suitable moral effect.

To other than young ladies and gentlemen the rooms are interesting, for Scottish art is at this moment more powerful than Scottish literature. Perhaps some half-dozen pictures in each Academy's Exhibition are the most notable intellectual products that Scotland can present for the year. The Scottish brush is stronger than the Scottish pen. It is in landscape and—at all events up till the other day, when Sir John Watson Gordon died—in portraiture that the Scotch school excels. It excels in the one in virtue of the national scenery, and in the other in virtue of the national insight and humour. For the making of a good portrait a great deal more is required than excellent colour and dexterous brush-work—shrewdness, insight, imagination, common sense, and many another mental quality besides, are needed. No man can paint a good portrait unless he knows his sitter thoroughly; and every good portrait is a kind of biography. It is curious, as indicating that the instinct for biography and portrait-painting are alike in essence, that in both walks of art the Scotch have been unusually successful. It would seem that there is something in the national char-

acter predisposing to excellence in these departments of effort. Strictly to inquire how far this predisposition arises from the national shrewdness or the national humour, would be needless; thus much is certain, that Scotland has at various times produced the best portrait-painters and the best writers of biography to be found in the compass of the islands. In the past, she can point to Boswell's "Life of Johnson" and Raeburn's portraits: she yet can claim Thomas Carlyle; and but lately she could claim Sir John Watson Gordon. Thomas Carlyle is a portrait-painter, and Sir John Watson Gordon was a biographer.

On the walls of the Exhibition, as I have said, will be found some of the best products of the Scottish brain. There, year after year, are to be found the pictures of Mr Noel Paton—some, of the truest pathos, like the "Home from the Crimea;" or that group of ladies and children in the cellar at Cawnpore, listening to the footsteps of deliverers, whom they conceive to be destroyers; or "Luther at Erfurt," the gray morning light breaking in on him as he is with fear and trembling working out his own salvation—and the world's. We have these,

but we have at times others quite different from these, and of a much lower scale of excellence, although hugely admired by the young people aforesaid — pictures in which attire is painted instead of passion; where the merit consists in exquisite renderings of unimportant details— jewels, tassels, and dagger hilts; where a landscape is sacrificed to a bunch of ferns, a tragic situation to the pattern on the lady's zone, or the slashed jacket and purple leggings of the knight. Then there are Mr Drummond's pictures from Scottish history and ballad poetry—a string of wild moss-troopers riding over into England to lift cattle; John Knox on his wedding-day leading his wife home to his quaint dwelling in the Canongate; the wild lurid Grassmarket, crowded with rioters, crimson with torchlight, spectators filling every window of the tall houses, while Porteous is being carried to his death—the Castle standing high above the tumult against the blue midnight and the stars; or the death procession of Montrose— the hero seated on hurdle, not on battle-steed, with beard untrimmed, hair dishevelled, dragged through the crowded street by the city hangman and his

horses, yet proud of aspect, as if the slogans of Inverlochy were ringing in his ears, and flashing on his enemies on the balcony above him the fires of his disdain. Then there are Mr Harvey's solemn twilight moors, and covenanting scenes of marriage, baptism, and funeral. And drawing the eye with a stronger fascination—because they represent the places in which we are about to wander—the landscapes of Horatio Macculloch—stretches of Border moorland, with solitary gray peels on which the watery sunbeam strikes, a thread of smoke rising far off from the gipsy's fire; Loch Scavaig in its wrath, the thunder gloom blackening on the peaks of Cuchullin, the fierce rain crashing down on white rock and shingly shore; sunset on Loch Ard, the mountains hanging inverted in the golden mirror, a plump of water-fowl starting from the reeds in the foreground, and shaking the splendour into dripping wrinkles and widening rings; Ben Cruachan wearing his streak of snow at midsummer, and looking down on Kilchurn Castle and the winding Awe. He is the most national of the northern landscape-painters; and although he can, on occasion, paint grasses and flowers, and the

shimmer of reed-blades in the wind, he loves vast desolate spaces, the silence of the Highland wilderness where the wild deer roam, the shore on which subsides the last curl of the indolent wave. He loves the tall crag wet and gleaming in the sunlight, the rain-cloud on the moor, blotting out the distance, the setting sun raying out lances of flame from behind the stormy clouds —clouds torn, but torn into gold, and flushed with a brassy radiance.

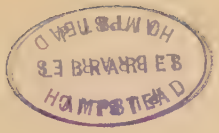
May is an exciting month in Edinburgh, for, towards its close, the Assemblies of the Established and Free Churches meet. For a fortnight or so the clerical element predominates in the city. Every presbytery in Scotland sends up its representative to the metropolis, and an astonishing number of black coats and white neckcloths flit about the streets. At high noon the gaiety of Princes Street is subdued with innumerable suits of sable. Ecclesiastical newspapers let the world wag as it pleases, so intent are they on the debates. Rocky-featured elders from the far north come up interested in some kirk dispute; and junior counsel waste the midnight oil preparing for appearance at

the bar of the House. The opening of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is attended with a pomp and circumstance which seems a little at variance with Presbyterian quietude of tone and contempt of sacerdotal vanities. Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner resides at Holyrood, and on the morning of the day on which the Assembly opens he holds his first levee. People rush to warm themselves in the dim reflection of the royal sunshine, and return with faces happy and elate. On the morning the Assembly opens, the military line the streets from Holyrood to the Assembly Hall. A regimental band and a troop of lancers wait outside the palace gates while the procession is slowly getting itself into order. The important moment at length arrives. The Commissioner has taken his seat in the carriage. Out bursts the brass band, piercing every ear; the lancers caracole; an orderly rides with eager spur; the long train of carriages begins to crawl forward in an intermittent manner, with many a dreary pause. At last the head of the procession appears along the peopled way. First come, in hired carriages, the city councillors, clothed in scarlet robes, and

with cocked hats upon their heads. The very mothers that bore them could not recognise them now. They pass on silent with dignity. Then comes a troop of halberdiers in mediæval costume, and looking for all the world as if the Kings, Jacks, and Knaves had walked out of a pack of cards. Then comes a carriage full of magistrates, wearing their gold chains of office over their scarlet cloaks, and eyeing sternly the small boy in the crowd who, from a natural sense of humour, has given vent to an irreverent observation. Then comes the band; then a squadron of lancers, whose horses the music seems to affect; then a carriage occupied with high legal personages, with powder in their hair, and rapiers by their sides, which they could not draw for their lives. Then comes the private carriage of his Grace, surrounded by lancers, whose mercurial steeds plunge and rear, and back and sidle, and scatter the mob as they come prancing broadside on to the pavement, smiting sparks of fire from the kerbstones with their iron hoofs. Thereafter, Tom, Jack, and Harry, for every cab, carriage, and omnibus of the line of route is now allowed to fall in—and so, attended by halberdiers, and soldiers,

and a brass band, her Majesty's Commissioner goes to open the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. As his Grace has to attend all the sittings of the reverend court, the Government, it is said, generally selects for the office a nobleman slightly dull of hearing. The Commissioner has no power, he has no voice in the deliberations; but he is indispensable, as a corporation mace is indispensable at a corporation meeting. While the debate is going on below, and two reverend fathers are passionately throttling each other, he is not unfrequently seen, with spectacles on nose, placidly perusing the *Times*. He is allowed two thousand pounds a year, and his duty is to spend it. He keeps open table for the assembled clergymen. He holds a grand evening levee, to which several hundred people are invited. If you are lucky enough to receive a card of invitation, you fall into the line of carriages opposite the Register House about eight o'clock, you are off the High School at nine, ten peals from the church-spires when you are at the end of Regent Terrace, and by eleven your name is being shouted by gorgeous lackeys — whose income is probably as great as your own—

through the corridors of Holyrood as you advance towards the presence. When you arrive you find that the country parson, with his wife and daughter, have been before you, and you are a lucky man if, for refreshment, you can secure a bit of remainder sponge-cake and a glass of lukewarm sherry. On the last occasion of the Commissioner's levee the newspapers inform me that seventeen hundred invitations were issued. Think of it—seventeen hundred persons on that evening bowed before the Shadow of Majesty, and then backed in their gracefulest manner. On that evening the Shadow of Majesty performed seventeen hundred genuflections! I do not grudge the Lord Commissioner his two thousand pounds. Verily, the labourer is worthy of his hire. The vale of life is not without its advantages.



STIRLING AND THE NORTH.

EDINBURGH and Stirling are spinster sisters, who were both in their youth beloved by Scottish kings; but Stirling is the more wrinkled in feature, the more old-fashioned in attire, and not nearly so well to do in the world. She smacks more of the antique time, and wears the ornaments given her by royal lovers—sadly broken and worn now, and not calculated to yield much if brought to the hammer—more ostentatiously in the public eye than does Edinburgh. On the whole, perhaps, her stock of these red sandstone gew-gaws is the more numerous. In many respects there is a striking likeness between the two cities. Between them they in a manner monopolise Scottish history; kings dwelt in both—in and around both may yet be seen traces of battle. Both have castles towering to heaven from the crests of up-piled rocks; both towns are hilly, rising terrace above terrace. The country around Stirling

is interesting from its natural beauty no less than from its historical associations. Many battles were fought in the seeing of the castle towers. Stirling Bridge, Carron, Bannockburn, Sauchieburn, Sheriffmuir, Falkirk—these battle-fields lie in the immediate vicinity. From the field of Bannockburn you obtain the finest view of Stirling. The Ochills are around you. Yonder sleeps the Abbey Craig, where, on a summer day, Wight Wallace sat. You behold the houses climbing up, picturesque, smoke-feathered; and the wonderful rock, in which the grace of the lily and the strength of the hills are mingled, and on which the castle sits as proudly as ever did rose on its stem. Eastward from the castle ramparts stretches a great plain, bounded on either side by mountains, and before you the vast fertility dies into distance, flat as the ocean when winds are asleep. It is through this plain that the Forth has drawn her glittering coils—a silvery entanglement of loops and links—a watery labyrinth—which Macneil has sung in no ignoble numbers, and which every summer the whole world flocks to see. Turn round, look in the opposite

direction, and the aspect of the country has entirely changed. It undulates like a rolling sea. Heights swell up into the blackness of pines, and then sink away into valleys of fertile green. At your feet the Bridge of Allan sleeps in azure smoke —the most fashionable of all the Scottish *spas*, wherein, by hundreds of invalids, the last new novel is being diligently perused. Beyond are the classic woods of Keir; and ten miles farther, what see you? A multitude of blue mountains climbing the heavens! The heart leaps up to greet them—the ramparts of a land of romance, from the mouths of whose glens broke of old the foray of the freebooter; and with a chief in front, with banner and pibroch in the wind, the terror of the Highland war. Stirling, like a huge brooch, clasps Highlands and Lowlands together.

Standing on the ramparts of Stirling Castle, the spectator cannot help noticing an unsightly excresence of stone and lime rising on the brow of the Abbey Craig. This is the Wallace Tower. Designed to commemorate the war for independence, the building is making but slow progress. It is maintained by charitable contributions, like

a lying-in hospital. It is a big beggar man, like O'Connell. It is tormented by an eternal lack of pence, like Mr Dick Swiveller. It sends round the hat as frequently as ever did Mr Leigh Hunt. The Wallace Monument, like the Scottish Rights' Association, sprang from the desire—a good deal stronger a few years ago than now—to preserve in Scotland something of a separate national existence. Scotland and England were married at the Union; but by many Scotsmen it is considered more dignified that, while appearing as "one flesh" on great public occasions, the two countries should live in separate apartments, see their own circles of friends, and spend their time as to each other it may seem fit. Whether any good could arise from such a state of matters it is needless to inquire—such a state of matters being a plain impossibility. It is apparent that through intimate connexion, community of interest, the presence of one common government, and in a thousand other ways, Time is crumbling down Scotland and England into—Britain. We may storm against this from platforms, declaim passionately against it in "Lays of the Cavaliers," lift up our voices and weep over it in

"Braemar Ballads," but necessity cares little for these things, and quietly does her work. In Scotland one is continually coming into contact with an unreasonable prejudice against English manners, institutions, and forms of thought; and in her expression of these prejudices Scotland is frequently neither great nor dignified. There is a narrowness and touchiness about her which is more frequently found in villages than in great cities. She continually suspects that the Englishman is about to touch her thistle rudely, or to take liberties with her unicorn. Some eight years ago, when lecturing in Edinburgh, Mr Thackeray was hissed for making an allusion to Queen Mary. The audience knew perfectly well that the great satirist was correct in what he stated; but being an Englishman it was impertinent in him to speak the truth about a Scottish Queen in the presence of Scotsmen. When, on the other hand, an English orator comes amongst us, whether as Lord Rector at one of our universities, or the deliverer of an inaugural address at the Philosophical Institution in Edinburgh, and winds up his harangue with flowing allusions to Wallace, Bruce, Burns, our blue hills, John Knox, Caledonia

stern and wild, the garb of old Gaul—the closing sentences are lost to the reporters in the frantic cheers of the audience. Several years ago the Scottish Rights' Association, headed by the most chivalric nobleman, and by the best poet in Scotland, surrounded by a score of merchant princes, assembled in the City Hall of Glasgow, and for a whole night held high jubilee. The patriotic fervours, the eloquent speeches, the volleys of cheers, did not so much as break a single tea-cup or appoint a new policeman. Even the eloquent gentleman who volunteered to lay down his head at Carlisle in support of the good cause has never been asked to implement his promise. The patriot's head is of more use to himself than it can possibly be to any one else. And does not this same prejudice against England, this indisposition to yield up ancient importance, this standing upon petty dignity, live in the cry for Scottish University reform? Is not this the heart of the matter—because England has universities, rich with gifts of princes and the bequests of the charitable, should not Scotland have richly-endowed universities also? In nature the ball fits into the

socket more or less perfectly; and the Scottish universities are what the wants and requirements of the Scottish people have made them. We cannot grow in a day an Oxford or a Cambridge on this northern soil; and could Scotsmen forget that they *are* Scotsmen they would see that it is not desirable so to do. Our universities have sent forth for generations physicians, lawyers, divines, properly enough qualified to fulfil their respective duties; and if every ten years or so some half-dozen young men appear with an appetite for a higher education than Scotland can give, and with means to gratify it, what then? In England there are universities able and willing to supply their wants. Their doors stand open to the Scottish youth. Admitting that we could by governmental interference or otherwise make our Scottish universities equal to Oxford or Cambridge in wealth and erudition, would we benefit thereby the half-dozen ambitious Scottish youth? Not one whit. Far better that they should conclude their education at an English university—in that wider confluence of the streams of society—amid those elder traditions of learning and civility.

And yet this erection of the Wallace Tower on the Abbey Craig has a deeper significance than its promoters are in the least degree aware of. There *is* a certain propriety in the building of a Wallace Monument. Scotland has been united to England, and is beginning to lose remembrance of her independence and separate history—just as the matron in her conjoint duties and interests begins to grow unfamiliar with the events of her girlhood, and with the sound of her maiden name. It is only when the memory of a hero ceases to be a living power in the hearts of men that they think of raising a monument to him. Monuments are for the dead, not for the living. When we hear that some venerable sheik has taken to call public meetings in Mecca, to deliver speeches, and to issue subscription lists for the purpose of raising a monument to Mohammed, and that these efforts are successful, we shall be quite right in thinking that the crescent is in its wane. Although the subscribers think it something quite other, the building of the Wallace Monument is a bidding farewell to Scottish nationality.

It is from Stirling that I start on my summer

journey, and the greater portion of it I purpose to perform on foot. There is a railway now to Callander, whereby time is saved and enjoyment destroyed—but the railway I shall in nowise patronise, meaning to abide by the old coach road. In a short time you are beyond the Bridge of Allan, beyond the woods of Keir, and holding straight on to Dunblane. Reaching it, you pause for a little on the old bridge to look at the artificial waterfall, and the ruined cathedral on the rising ground across the stream, and the walks which Bishop Leighton paced. There is really not much to detain one in the little gray city, and pressing on, you reach Doune, basking on the hill-side. Possibly the reader may never have heard of Doune, yet it has its lions. What are these? Look at the great bulk of the ruined castle! These towers, rising from miles of summer foliage into fair sunlight, a great Duke of Albany beheld for a moment, with a shock of long-past happiness and home, as he laid down his head on the block at Stirling. Rage and shame filled the last heave of the heart, the axe flashed, and ——. As you go down the steep town road, there is an old-fashioned

garden, and a well close to the wall. Look into it steadily—you observe a shadow on the sandy bottom, and the twinkle of a fin. 'Tis a trout—a blind one, which has dwelt, the people will tell you, in its watery cage, for ten years back. It is considered a most respectable inhabitant, and the urchin daring to angle for it would hardly escape whipping. You may leave Doune now. A Duke of Albany lost his head in the view of its castle, a blind trout lives in its well, and visitors feel more interested in the trout than in the duke. The country in the immediate vicinity of Doune is somewhat bare and unpromising, but as you advance it improves, and a few miles on, the road skirts the Teith, the sweetest voiced of all the Scottish streams. The Roman centurion heard that pebbly murmur on his march even as you now hear it. The river, like all beautiful things, is coquettish, and just when you come to love her music, she sweeps away into the darkness of the woods and leaves you companionless on the dusty road. Never mind, you will meet her again at Callander, and there, for a whole summer day, you can lean on the bridge and listen to her sing-

ing. Callander is one of the prettiest of Highland villages. It was sunset as I approached it first, years ago. Beautiful the long crooked street of white-washed houses dressed in rosy colours. Prettily-dressed children were walking or running about. The empty coach was standing at the door of the hotel, and the smoking horses were being led up and down. And right in front stood King Benledi, clothed in imperial purple, the spokes of splendour from the sinking sun raying far away into heaven from behind his mighty shoulders.

Callander sits like a watcher at the opening of the glens, and is a rendezvous of tourists. To the right is the Pass of Leny—well worthy of a visit. You ascend a steep path, birch-trees on right and left ; the stream comes brawling down, sleeping for a moment in black pools beloved by anglers, and then hasting on in foam and fury to meet her sister in the Vale of Menteith below. When you have climbed the pass, you enter on a green treeless waste, and soon approach Loch Lubnaig, with the great shadow of a hill blackening across it. The loch is perhaps cheerful enough when the sun is shining on it, but the sun

in that melancholy region is but seldom seen. Beside the road is an old churchyard, for which no one seems to care—the tombstones being submerged in a sea of rank grass. The loch of the rueful countenance will not be visited on the present occasion. My course lies round the left flank of Benledi, straight on for the Trosachs and Loch Katrine. Leaving Callander, you cross the waters of the Leny—changed now from the fury that, with raised voice and streaming tresses, leaped from rock to rock in the glen above—and walk into the country made immortal by the "Lady of the Lake." Every step you take is in the footsteps of Apollo: speech at once becomes song. There is Coilantogle Ford; Loch Venachar, yonder, is glittering away in windy sunshine to the bounding hills. Passing the lake you come on a spot where the hill-side drops suddenly down on the road. On this hill-side Vich Alpine's warriors started out of the ferns at the whistle of their chief; and if you travelled on the coach, the driver would repeat half the poem with curious variations, and point out the identical rock against which Fitz-James leaned—rock on which a dozen eye-

glasses are at once levelled in wonder and admiration. The loveliest sight on the route to the Trosachs is about to present itself. At a turn of the road Loch Achray is before you. Beyond expression beautiful is that smiling lake, mirroring the hills, whether bare and green or plumaged with woods from base to crest. Fair azure gem in a setting of mountains! the traveller—even if a bagman—cannot but pause to drink in its fairy beauty; cannot but remember it when far away amid other scenes and associations. At every step the scenery grows wilder. Loch Achray disappears. High in upper air tower the summits of Ben-Aan and Ben-Venue. You pass through the gorge of the Trosachs, whose rocky walls, born in earthquake and fiery deluge, the fanciful summer has been dressing these thousand years, clothing their feet with drooping ferns and rods of foxglove bells, blackening their breasts with pines, feathering their pinnacles with airy birches, that dance in the breeze like plumage on a warrior's helm. The wind here becomes a musician. Echo sits babbling beneath the rock. The gorge, too, is but the prelude to a finer charm; for before you are

aware, doubling her beauty with surprise, there breaks on the right the silver sheet of Loch Katrine, with a dozen woody islands, sleeping peacefully on their shadows.

On the loch, the steamer *Rob Roy* awaits you, and away you pant and fume towards a wharf, and an inn, with an unpronounceable name, at the farther end. The lake does not increase in beauty as you proceed. All its charms are congregated at the mouth of the Trosachs, and the upper reaches are bare, desolate, and uninteresting. You soon reach the wharf, and after your natural rage at a toll of twopence exacted from you on landing has subsided, and you have had a snack of something at the inn, you start on the wild mountain road towards Inversneyd. The aspect of the country has now changed. The hills around are bare and sterile, brown streams gurgle down their fissures, the long yellow ribbon of road runs away before you, dipping out of sight sometimes, and reappearing afar. You pass a turf hut, and your nostrils are invaded by a waft of peat reek which sets you coughing, and brings the tears into your eyes; and the juvenile natives

eye you askance, and wear the airiest form of the national attire. In truth, there is not a finer bit of Highland road to be found anywhere than that which runs between the inn—which, like the Russian heroes in "Don Juan," might be immortal if the name of it could be pronounced by human organs —and the hotel at Inversneyd. When you have travelled some three miles, the scenery improves, the hills rise into nobler forms with misty wreaths about them, and as you pursue your journey a torrent becomes your companion. Presently, a ruin rises on the hill-side, the nettles growing on its melancholy walls. It is the old fort of Inversneyd, built in King William's time to awe the turbulent clans. Nothing can be more desolate than its aspect. Sunshine seems to mock it; it is native and endued into its element when wrapt in mist, or pelted by the wintry rain. Passing the old stone-and-lime mendicant on the hill-side—by the way, Tradition mumbles something about General Wolfe having been stationed there at the beginning of his military career—you descend rapidly on Loch Lomond and Inversneyd. The road by this time has become another Pass of Leny: on

either side the hills approach, the torrent roars down in a chain of cataracts, and, in a spirit of bravado, takes its proudest leap at the last. Quite close to the fall is the hotel; and on the frail timber bridge that overhangs the cataract, you can see groups of picturesque-hunters, the ladies gracefully timid, the gentlemen gallant and reassuring. Inversneyd is beautiful, and it possesses an added charm in being the scene of one of Wordsworth's poems; and he who has stood on the crazy bridge, and watched the flash and thunder of the stream beneath him, and gazed on the lake surrounded by mountains, will ever after retain the picture in remembrance, although to him there should not have been vouchsafed the vision of the "Highland Girl." A steamer picks you up at Inversneyd, and slides down Loch Lomond with you to Tarbet, a village sleeping in very presence of the mighty Ben, whose forehead is almost always bound with a cloudy handkerchief. Although the loch is finer higher up, where it narrows toward Glen Falloch —more magnificent lower down, where it widens, many-isled, toward Balloch—it is by no means to

be despised at Tarbet. Each bay and promontory wears its peculiar charm; and if the scenery does not astonish, it satisfies. Tarbet can boast, too, of an excellent inn, in which, if the traveller be wise, he will, for one night at least, luxuriously take his ease.

Up betimes next morning, you are on the beautiful road which runs between Tarbet and Arrochar, and begin, through broken, white upstreaming mists, to make acquaintance with the "Cobbler" and some other peaks of that rolling country to which Celtic facetiousness has given the name of "The Duke of Argyle's Bowling-green." Escaping from the birches that line the road, and descending on Arrochar and Loch Long, you can leisurely inspect the proportions of the mountain Crispin. He is a gruesome carle, and inhospitable to strangers. He does not wish to be intruded upon—is a very hermit, in fact; for when, after wild waste of breath and cuticle, a daring mortal climbs up to him, anxious to be introduced, behold he has slipped his cable, and is nowhere to be seen. And it does not improve the temper of the climber that, when down again, and casting up his eyes, he

discovers the rocky figure sitting in his accustomed place. The Cobbler's Wife sits a little way off—an ancient dame, to the full as withered in appearance as her husband, and as difficult of access. They dwell in tolerable amity the twain, but when they do quarrel it is something tremendous! The whole county knows when a tiff is in progress. The sky darkens above them. The Cobbler frowns black as midnight. His Wife sits sulking in the mist. His Wife's conduct aggravates the Cobbler—who is naturally of a peppery temper—and he gives vent to a discontented growl. Nothing loath, and to the full as irascible as her spouse, his Wife spits back fire upon him. The row begins. They flash at one another in the savagest manner, scolding all the while in the grandest Billingsgate. Everything listens to them for twenty miles round. At last the Wife gives in, and falls to downright weeping, the crusty old fellow sending a shot into her at intervals. She cries, and he grumbles, into the night. Peace seems to have been restored somehow when everybody is asleep; for next morning the Cobbler has renewed his youth. He shines in the sun like a very bridegroom, not a frown on the old

countenance of him, and his Wife opposite, the tears hardly dried upon her face yet, smiles upon him through her prettiest head-dress of mist; and for the next six weeks they enjoy as bright, unclouded weather as husband and wife can expect in a world where everything is imperfect.

You leave the little village of Arrochar, trudge round the head of Loch Long, and proceeding downward, along the opposite shore, and skirting the base of the Cobbler, strike for the opening of Glencroe, on your road to Inverary. Glencoe is to the other Highland glens what Tennyson is to contemporary British poets. If Glencoe did not exist, Glencroe would be famous. It is several miles long, lonely, sterile, and desolate. A stream rages down the hollow, fed by tributary burns that dash from the receding mountain-tops. The hill-sides are rough with boulders, as a sea-rock is rough with limpets. Showers cross the path a dozen times during the finest day. As you go along, the glen is dappled with cloud-shadows; you hear the bleating of unseen sheep, and the chances are, that, in travelling along its whole extent, opportunity will not be granted you of bidding "good-morrow"

to a single soul. If you are a murderer, you could shout out your secret here, and no one be a bit the wiser. At the head of the glen the road becomes exceedingly steep ; and as you pant up the incline, you hail the appearance of a stone seat bearing the welcome motto, "Rest, and be thankful." You rest, and *are* thankful. This seat was erected by General Wade while engaged in his great work of Highland road-making ; and so long as it exists the General will be remembered—and Earl Russell too. At this point the rough breast of a hill rises in front, dividing the road ; the path to the left runs away down into the barren and solitary Hell's Glen, in haste to reach Loch Goil ; the other to the right leads through bare Glen Arkinglass, to St Catherine's, and the shore of Loch Fyne, at which point you arrive after a lonely walk of two hours.

The only thing likely to interest the stranger at the little hostelry of St Catherine's is John Campbell, the proprietor of the same, and driver of the coach from the inn to the steamboat wharf at Loch Goil. John has a presentable person and a sagacious countenance ; his gray eyes are the homes of hu-

mour and shrewdness; and when seated on the box, he flicks his horses and manages the ribbons to admiration. He is a good story-teller, and he knows it. He has not started on his journey a hundred yards when, from something or another, he finds you occasion for a story, which is sure to produce a roar of laughter from those alongside of, and behind, him. Encouraged by success, John absolutely coruscates, anecdote follows anecdote as flash of sheet-lightning succeeds flash of sheet-lightning on a summer night; and by the time he is half-way, he is implored to desist by some sufferer whose midriff he has convulsed. John is naturally a humorist; and as every summer and autumn the Highlands are overrun with tourists, he, from St Catherine's to Loch Goil, surveys mankind with extensive view. In his time he has talked with most of our famous men, and can reproduce their tones to perfection. It is curious to notice how literary and political greatness picture themselves in the eyes of a Highland coachman! The lion who entrances the *soirées* has his mane clipped. For John Campbell, cliques and coteries, and the big guns of the reviews, exist not. To him Fame speaks in Gaelic,

and concerns herself mainly with sheep and black cattle. What is the good of being a distinguished novelist if you cannot swallow a glass of bitters of a morning? John will distinguish between Tupper and Tennyson, and instruct you which is the better man, but he will draw his conclusions from their "tips" rather than from their poetry. He will agree with you that Lord Palmerston is a distinguished individual; but while you are thinking of the Premier's statesmanship, he is thinking of the Premier's jauntiness on the morning he had the honour of driving him. John's ideas of public men, although arrived at after a curious fashion, are pretty generally correct. Every one who tarries at St Catherine's should get himself driven across to Loch Goil by John Campbell, and should take pains to procure a seat on the box beside him. When he returns to the south, he can relate over again the stories he hears, and make himself the hero of them. The thing has been done before, and will be again.

A small wash-tub of a steamer carries you across Loch Fyne to Inverary in an hour. Arriving, you find the capital of the West Highlands a rather

pretty place, with excellent inns, several churches, a fine bay, a ducal residence, a striking conical hill —Duniquoich the barbarous name of it—wooded to the chin, and with an ancient watch-tower perched on its bald crown. The chief seat of the Argyles cannot boast of much architectural beauty, being a square building with pepper-box-looking towers stuck on the corners. The grounds are charming, containing fine timber, winding walks, stately avenues, gardens, and through all, spanned by several bridges, the Airy bubbles sweetly to the sea. Scott is here. If the "Lady of the Lake" rings in your ears at the Trosachs, the "Legend of Montrose" haunts you at Inverary. Every footstep of ground is hallowed by that noble romance. It is the best guide-book to the place. No tourist should leave Inverary before he ascends Duniquoich—no very difficult task either, for a path winds round and round it. When you emerge from the woods beside the watch-tower on the summit, Inverary, far beneath, has dwindled to a toy town —not a sound is in the streets; unheard the steamer roaring at the wharf, and urging dilatory passengers to haste by the clashes of an angry bell. Along

the shore nets stretched from pole to pole wave in the drying wind. The great boatless blue loch stretches away flat as a ballroom floor; and the eye wearies in its flight over endless miles of brown moor and mountain. Turn your back on the town, and gaze towards the north! It is still "a far cry to Loch Awe," and a wilderness of mountain peaks tower up between you and that noblest of Scottish lakes!—of all colours too—green with pasture, brown with moorland, touched with the coming purple of the heather, black with a thunder-cloud of pines. What a region to watch the sun go down upon! But for that you cannot wait; for to-day you lunch at Cladich, dine at Dalmally, and sleep in the neighbourhood of Kilchurn—in the immediate presence of Ben Cruachan.

A noble vision of mountains is to be obtained from the road above Cladich. Dalmally is a very paradise of a Highland inn,—quiet, sequestered, begirt with the majesty and the silence of mountains,—a place where a world-weary man may soothe back into healthful motion jarred pulse and brain; a delicious nest for a happy pair to waste the honeymoon in. Dalmally stands on the shores

of Loch Awe, and in the immediate vicinity of Kilchurn Castle and Ben Cruachan. The castle is picturesque enough to please the eye of the landscape-painter, and large enough to impress the visitor with a sense of baronial grandeur. And it is ancient enough, and fortunate enough too—for to that age does not always attain—to have legends growing upon its walls like the golden lichens or the darksome ivies. The vast shell of a building looks strangely impressive standing there, mirrored in summer waters, with the great mountain looking down on it. It was built, it is said, by a lady in the Crusade times, when her lord was battling with the infidel. The most prosaic man gazing on a ruin becomes a poet for the time being. You incontinently sit down, and think how, in the old pile, life went on for generations—how children were born and grew up there—how brides were brought home there, the bridal blushes yet on their cheeks—how old men died there, and had by filial fingers their eyes closed, as blinds are drawn down on the windows of an empty house, and the withered hands crossed decently upon the breasts that will heave no more

with any passion. The yule fires, and the feast fires that blazed on the old hearths have gone out now. The arrow of the foeman seeks no longer the window slit. To day and night, to winter and summer, Kilchurn stands empty as a skull; yet with no harshness about it; possessed rather of a composed and decent beauty—reminding you of a good man's grave, with the number of his ripe years, and the catalogue of his virtues chiselled on the stone above him: telling of work faithfully done, and of the rest that follows, for which all the weary pine.

Ben Cruachan, if not the monarch of Scottish mountains, is, at all events, one of the princes of the blood. He is privileged to wear a snow-wreath in presence of the sun at his midsummer levee, and like a prince he wears it on the rough breast of him. Ben Cruachan is seen from afar: is difficult to climb, and slopes slowly down to the sea level, his base being twenty miles in girth, it is said. From Ben Cruachan and Kilchurn, Loch Awe, bedropt with wooded islands, stretches Obanwards, presenting in its course every variety of scenery. Now the loch spreads

like a sea, now it shrinks to a rapid river—now the banks are wooded like the Trosachs, now they are bare as the "Screes" at Wastwater; and consider as you walk along what freaks light and shade are playing every moment—how shadows, hundred-armed, creep along the mountain-side—how the wet rock sparkles like a diamond, and then goes out—how the sunbeam slides along a belt of pines—and how, a slave to the sun, the lake quivers in light around her islands when he is unobscured, and wears his sable colours when a cloud is on his face. On your way to Oban there are many places worth seeing: Loch Etive, with its immemorial pines, beloved by Professor Wilson; Bunawe, Taynult, Connel Ferry, with its sea view and salt-water cataract; and Dunstaffnage Castle, once a royal residence, and from which the stone was taken which is placed beneath the coronation chair at Westminster. And so, if the whole journey from Inverary is performed on foot, Luna will light the traveller into Oban.

OBAN.

OBAN, which, during winter, is a town of deserted hotels, begins to get busy by the end of June. Yachts skim about in the little bay; steamers, deep-sea and coasting, are continually arriving and departing; vehicles rattle about in the one broad, and the many narrow streets; and in the inns, boots, chamber-maid, and waiter are distracted with the clangour of innumerable bells. Out of doors, Oban is not a bad representation of Vanity Fair. Every variety of pleasure-seeker is to be found there, and every variety of costume. Reading parties from Oxford lounge about, smoke, stare into the small shop windows, and consult "Black's Guide." Beauty, in light attire, perambulates the principal street, and taciturn Valour in mufti accompanies her. Sportsmen in knickerbockers stand in groups at the hotel doors; Frenchmen chatter and shrug their shoulders; stolid Germans smoke curiously-curved meerschaum pipes; and

individuals who have not a drop of Highland blood in their veins flutter about in the garb of the Gael, "a hundredweight of cairngorms throwing a prismatic glory around their persons." All kinds of people, and all kinds of sounds are there. From the next street the tones of the bagpipe come on the ear; tipsy porters abuse each other in Gaelic. Round the corner the mail comes rattling from Fort William, the passengers clustering on its roof; from the pier the bell of the departing steamer urges passengers to make haste; and passengers who have lost their luggage rush about, shout, gesticulate, and not unfrequently come into fierce personal collision with one of the tipsy porters aforesaid. A more hurried, nervous, frenzied place than Oban, during the summer and autumn months, it is difficult to conceive. People seldom stay there above a night. The old familiar faces are the resident population. The tourist no more thinks of spending a week in Oban than he thinks of spending a week in a railway station. When he arrives his first question is after a bedroom; his second, as to the hour at which the steamer from the south is expected.

And the steamer, be it said, does not always

arrive at a reasonable hour. She may be detained some time at Greenock; in dirty weather she may be "on" the Mull of Cantyre all night, buffeted by the big Atlantic there; so that he must be a bold man, or a man gifted with the second sight, who ventures anything but a vague guess as to the hour of her arrival at Oban. And the weather *is* dirty; the panes are blurred with raindrops; outside one beholds an uncomfortable sodden world, a spongy sky above, and midway, a gull sliding sideways through the murky atmosphere. The streets are as empty now as they will be 'some months hence. Beauty is in her own room crying over "Enoch Arden," and Valour, taciturn as ever, is in the smoking saloon. The Oxford reading party—which, under the circumstances, has not the slightest interest in Plato—attempts, with no great success, to kill the time by playing at pitch-and-toss. The gentlemen in the Highland dress remain indoors—birds with fine feathers do not wish to have them draggled—and the philabeg and an umbrella would be a combination quite too ridiculous. The tipsy porter is for the time silent; but from the next street the bagpipe grows in volume and torture.

How the sound of it pains the nervous ear of a man half-maddened by a non-arriving steamer and a rainy day at Oban! Heavily the hours creep on; and at last the *Clansman* does steam in with wet decks—thoroughly washed by Atlantic brine last night—and her hundred and fifty passengers, two-thirds of whom are sea-sick.

I do not, however, proceed with the *Clansman*. I am waited for at Inverness; and so, when the weather has cleared, on a lovely morning, I am chasing the flying dazzle of the sun up the lovely Linnhe Loch; past hills that come out on one and recede; past shores that continually shift and change; and am at length set down at Fort William in the shadow of Ben Nevis.

When a man goes to Caprera, he, as a matter of course, brings a letter of introduction to Garibaldi —when I went to Fort William, I, equally as a matter of course, brought a letter of introduction to Long John. This gentleman, the distiller of the place, was the tallest man I ever beheld out of an exhibition—whence his familiar *sobriquet*—and must, in his youth, have been of incomparable physique. The German nation has not yet decided

whether Goethe or Schiller is the greater poet—the Highlander has not yet decided whether "Long John" or "Talisker" is the finer spirit. I presented my letter and was received with the hospitality and courteous grace so characteristic of the old Gael. He is gone now, the happy-hearted Hercules—gone like one of his own drams! His son distils in his stead—but he must feel that he is treading in the footsteps of a greater man. The machinery is the same, the malt is of quality as fine, but he will never produce whisky like him who is no more. The text is the same, but Charles Kean's Hamlet will never be like his father's.

I saw Inverlochy Castle, and thought of the craven Argyle, the gallant Montrose, the slaughtered Campbells. I walked up Glen Nevis; and then, one summer morning, I drove over to Bannavie, stepped on board a steamer, and was soon in the middle of the beautiful Loch Lochy.

And what a day and what a sail that was! What a cloudless sky above! What lights and shadows as we went! On Fort Augustus we descended by a staircase of locks, and while there I spent half

an hour in the museum of Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming. We then entered Loch Ness—stopped for a space to visit the Fall of Foyers, which, from scarcity of water, looked "seedy" as a moulting peacock; saw further on, and on the opposite shore, a promontory run out into the lake like an arm, and the vast ruin of Castle Urquhart at the end of it like a clenched fist—menacing all and sundry. Then we went on to Inverness, where I found my friend Fellowes, who for some time back had been amusing himself in that pleasant Highland town reading law. We drove out to Culloden, and stood on the moor at sunset. Here the butcher Cumberland trod out romance. Here one felt a Jacobite and a Roman Catholic. The air seemed scented by the fumes of altar-incense, by the burning of pastiles. The White Rose was torn and scattered, but its leaves had not yet lost their odours. "I should rather have died," I said, "like that wild chief who, when his clan would not follow him, burst into tears at the ingratitude of his children, and charged alone on the English bayonets, than like any other man of whom I have read in history."

"He wore the sole pair of brogues in the possession of his tribe," said my companion. "I should rather have died like Salkeld at the blowing in of the Delhi gate."

SKYE AT LAST.

WHILE tarrying at Inverness, a note which we had been expecting for some little time reached Fellowes and myself from M'Ian junior, to the effect that a boat would be at our service at the head of Loch Eishart on the arrival at Broadford of the Skye mail; and that six sturdy boatmen would therefrom convey us to our destination. This information was satisfactory, and we made our arrangements accordingly. The coach from Inverness to Dingwall—at which place we were to catch the mail—was advertised to start at four o'clock in the morning, and to reach its bourne two hours afterwards; so, to prevent all possibility of missing it, we resolved not to go to bed. At that preposterous hour we were in the street with our luggage, and in a short time the coach—which seemed itself not more than half awake—came lumbering up. For a while there was considerable noise; bags and parcels of various

kinds were tumbled out of the coach office, mysterious doors were opened in the body of the vehicle into which these were shot. The coach stowed away its parcels in itself, just as in itself the crab stows away its food and *impedimenta*. We clambered up into the front beside the driver, who was enveloped in a drab great-coat of many capes; the guard was behind. "All right," and then, with a cheery chirrup, a crack of the whip, a snort and toss from the gallant roadsters, we were off. There is nothing so delightful as travelling on a stage coach, when you start in good condition, and at a reasonable hour. For myself, I never tire of the varied road flashing past, and could dream through a country in that way from one week's end to the other. On the other hand, there is nothing more horrible than starting at four A.M., half-awake, breakfastless, the chill of the morning playing on your face as the dewy machine spins along. Your eyes close in spite of every effort, your blood thick with sleep, your brain stuffed with dreams; you wake and sleep, and wake again; and the Vale of Tempe itself, with a Grecian sunrise burning into day ahead, could not

rouse you into interest, or blunt the keen edge of your misery. I recollect nothing of this portion of our journey save its disagreeableness; and alit at Dingwall, cold, wretched, and stiff, with a cataract of needles and pins pouring down my right leg, and making locomotion anything but a pleasant matter. However, the first stage was over, and on that we congratulated ourselves. Alas! we did not know the sea of troubles into which we were about to plunge—the Iliad of misfortune of which we were about to become the heroes. We entered the inn, performed our ablutions, and sat down to breakfast with appetite. Towards the close of the meal my companion suggested that, to prevent accidents, it might be judicious to secure seats in the mail without delay. Accordingly I went in quest of the landlord, and after some difficulty discovered him in a small office littered with bags and parcels, turning over the pages of a ledger. He did not lift his eyes when I entered. I intimated my wish to procure two places toward Broadford. He turned a page, lingered on it with his eye as if loath to leave it, and then inquired my business. I repeated my message. He shook his

head. "You are too late; you can't get on to-day." "What! can't two places be had?" "Not for love or money, sir. Last week Lord Deerstalker engaged the mail for his servants. Every place is took." "The deuce! do you mean to say that we can't get on?" The man, whose eyes had returned to the page, which he held all the while in one hand, nodded assent. "Come, now, this sort of thing wont do. My friend and I are anxious to reach Broadford to-night. Do you mean to say that we must either return or wait here till the next mail comes up, some three days hence?" "You can post, if you like: I'll provide you with a machine and horses." "You'll provide us with a machine and horses," said I, while something shot through my soul like a bolt of ice.

I returned to Fellowes, who replied to my recital of the interview with a long whistle. When the mail was gone, we formed ourselves into a council of war. After considering our situation from every side, we agreed to post, unless the landlord should prove more than ordinarily rapacious. I went to the little office and informed him of our resolution. We chaffered a good deal, but at last a bargain

was struck. I will not mention what current coin of the realm was disbursed on the occasion; the charge was as moderate as in the circumstances could have been expected. I need only say that the journey was long, and to consist of six stages, a fresh horse at every stage.

In due time a dog-cart was brought to the door, in which was harnessed a tall raw-boned white horse, who seemed to be entering in the sullen depths of his consciousness a protest against our proceedings. We got in, and the animal was set in motion. There never was such a slow brute. He evidently disliked his work: perhaps he snuffed the rainy tempest imminent. Who knows! At all events, before he was done with us he took ample revenge for every kick and objurgation which we bestowed on him. Half an hour after starting, a huge rain-cloud was black above us; suddenly we noticed one portion crumble into a livid streak which slanted down to earth, and in a minute or two it burst upon us as if it had a personal injury to avenge. A scold of the Cowgate, emptying her wrath on the husband of her bosom, who has reeled home to her tipsy on Saturday

night, with but half his wages in his pocket, gives but a faint image of its virulence. Umbrellas and oil-skins — if we had had them— would have been useless. In less than a quarter of an hour we were saturated like a bale of cotton which has reposed for a quarter of a century at the bottom of the Atlantic; and all the while, against the fell lines of rain, heavy as bullets, straight as cavalry lances, jogged the white horse, heedless of cry and blow, with now and again but a livelier prick and motion of the ear, as if to him the whole thing was perfectly delightful. The first stage was a long one; and all the way from Strathpeffer to Garve, from Garve to Milltown, the rain rushed down on blackened wood, hissed in marshy tarn, boiled on iron crag. At last the inn was descried afar; a speck of dirty white in a world of rainy green. Hope revived within us. Another horse could be procured there. O Jarvie, cudgel his bones amain, and Fortune may yet smile!

On our arrival, however, we were informed that certain travellers had, two hours before, possessed themselves of the only animal of which the estab-

lishment could boast. At this intelligence hope fell down stone dead as if shot through the heart. There was nothing for it but to give our steed a bag of oats, and then to hie on. While the white was comfortably munching his oats, we noticed from the inn-door that the wet yellow road made a long circuit, and it occurred to us that if we struck across country for a mile or so at once, we could reach the point where the road disappeared in the distance quite as soon as our raw-boned friend. In any case waiting was weary work, and we were as wet now as we could possibly be. Instructing the driver to wait for us should we not be up in time—of which we averred there was not the slightest possibility—we started. We had firm enough footing at first; but after a while our journey was the counterpart of the fiend's passage through chaos, as described by Milton. Always stick to beaten tracks: short cuts, whether in the world of matter, or in the world of ethics, are bad things. In a little time we lost our way, as was to have been expected. The wind and rain beat right in our faces, we had swollen streams to cross, we tumbled into morasses,

we tripped over knotted roots of heather. When, after a severe march of a couple of hours, we gained the crest of a small eminence, and looked out on the wet, black desolation, Fellowes took out a half-crown from his waistcoat pocket, and expressed his intention there and then to "go in" for a Highland property. From the crest of this eminence, too, we beheld the yellow road beneath, and the dog-cart waiting; and when we got down to it, found the driver so indignant that we thought it prudent to propitiate him with our spirit flask. A caulker turneth away wrath—in the Highlands at least.

Getting in again the white went at a better pace, the rain slackened somewhat, and our spirits rose in proportion. Our hilarity, however, was premature. A hill rose before us, up which the yellow road twisted and wriggled itself. This hill the white would in nowise take. The whip was of no avail; he stood stock-still. Fellowes applied his stick to his ribs—the white put his fore legs steadily out before him and refused to move. I jumped out, seized the bridle, and attempted to drag him forward; the white tossed his head

high in air, showing at the same time a set of vicious teeth, and actually backed. What was to be done? Just at this moment, too, a party of drovers, mounted on red uncombed ponies, with hair hanging over their eyes, came up, and had the ill-feeling to *tee-hee* audibly at our discomfiture. This was another drop of acid squeezed into the bitter cup. Suddenly, at a well-directed whack, the white made a desperate plunge and took the hill. Midway he paused, and attempted his old game, but down came a hurricane of blows, and he started off—

"'Twere long to tell and sad to trace"

the annoyance that raw-boned quadruped wrought us. But it came to an end at last. And at parting I waved the animal, sullen and unbeloved, my last farewell; and wished that no green paddock should receive him in his old age, but that his ill-natured flesh should be devoured by the hounds; that leather should be made of his be-cudgelled hide, and hoped that, considering its toughness, of it should the boots and shoes of a poor man's children be manufactured.

Late in the afternoon we reached Jean-Town, on the shores of Loch Carron. 'Tis a tarry, scaly village, with a most ancient and fish-like smell. The inhabitants have suffered a sea-change. The men stride about in leather fishing-boots, the women sit at the open doors at work with bait-baskets. Two or three boats are moored at the stone-heaped pier. Brown, idle nets, stretched on high poles along the beach, flap in the winds. We had tea at the primeval inn, and on intimating to the landlord that we wished to proceed to Broadford, he went off to engage a boat and crew. In a short time an old sea-dog, red with the keen breeze, and redolent of the fishy brine, entered the apartment with the information that everything was ready. We embarked at once, a sail was hoisted, and on the vacillating puff of evening we dropped gently down the loch. There was something in the dead silence of the scene and the easy motion of the boat that affected one. Weary with travel, worn out with want of sleep, yet, at the same time, far from drowsy, with every faculty and sense rather in a condition of wide and intense wakefulness, everything around became invested with a singular

and frightful feeling. *Why*, I know not, for I have had no second experience of the kind; but on this occasion, to my overstrained vision, every object became instinct with a hideous and multitudinous life. The clouds congealed into faces and human forms. Figures started out upon me from the mountain-sides. The rugged surfaces, seamed with torrent lines, grew into monstrous figures, and arms with clutching fingers. The sweet and gracious shows of nature became, under the magic of lassitude, a phantasmagoria hateful and abominable. Fatigue changed the world for me as the microscope changes a dewdrop—when the jewel, pure from the womb of the morning, becomes a world swarming with unutterable life—a battle-field of unknown existences. As the aspects of things grew indistinct in the fading light, the possession lost its pain; but the sublimity of one illusion will be memorable. For a barrier of mountains standing high above the glimmering lower world, distinct and purple against a "daffodil sky," seemed the profile of a gigantic man stretched on a bier, and the features, in their sad imperial beauty, seemed those of the first Napoleon. Wonderful that mountain-monu-

ment, as we floated seaward into distance—the figure sculptured by earthquake, and fiery deluges sleeping up there, high above the din and strife of earth, robed in solemn purple, its background the yellow of the evening sky!

About ten we passed the rocky portals of the loch on the last sigh of evening, and stood for the open sea. The wind came only in intermitting puffs, and the boatmen took to the oars. The transparent autumn night fell upon us; the mainland was gathering in gloom behind, and before us rocky islands glimmered on the level deep. To the chorus of a Gaelic song of remarkable length and monotony the crew plied their oars, and every plash awoke the lightning of the main. The sea was filled with elfin fire. I hung over the stern, and watched our brilliant wake seething up into a kind of pale emerald, and rushing away into the darkness. The coast on our left had lost form and outline, withdrawing itself into an undistinguishable mass of gloom, when suddenly the lights of a village broke clear upon it like a bank of glow-worms. I inquired its name, and was answered, "Plockton." In half an hour the scattered

lights became massed into one; soon that died out in the distance. Eleven o'clock! Like one man the rowers pull. The air is chill on the ocean's face, and we wrap ourselves more closely in our cloaks. There is something uncomfortable in the utter silence and loneliness of the hour—in the phosphorescent sea, with its ghostly splendours. The boatmen, too, have ceased singing. Would that I were taking mine ease with M'Ian! Suddenly a strange sighing sound is heard behind. One of the crew springs up, hauls down the sail, and the next moment the squall is upon us. The boatmen hang on their oars, and you hear the rushing rain. Whew! how it hisses down on us, crushing everything in its passion. The long dim stretch of coast, the dark islands, are in a moment shut out; the world shrinks into a circumference of twenty yards; and within that space the sea is churned into a pale illumination—a light of misty gold. In a moment we are wet to the skin. The boatmen have shipped their oars, drawn their jacket-collars over their ears, and there we lie at midnight shelterless to the thick hiss of the rain. But it has spent itself at last, and a few stars are

again twinkling in the blue. It is plain our fellows are somewhat tired of the voyage. They cannot depend upon a wind; it will either be a puff, dying as soon as born, or a squall roaring down on the sea, through the long funnels of the glens; and to pull all the way is a dreary affair. The matter is laid before us—the voices of the crew are loud for our return. They will put us ashore at Plockton—they will take us across in the morning. A cloud has again blotted the stars, and we consent. Our course is altered, the oars are pulled with redoubled vigour; soon the long dim line of coast rises before us, but the lights have burned out now, and the Plocktonites are asleep. On we go; the boat shoots into a "midnight cove," and we leap out upon masses of slippery sea-weed. The craft is safely moored. Two of the men seize our luggage, and we go stumbling over rocks, until the road is reached. A short walk brings us to the inn, or rather public-house, which is, however, closed for the night. After some knocking we were admitted, wet as Newfoundlands from the lake. Wearied almost to death, I reached my bedroom, and was about to divest myself of my

soaking garments, when, after a low tap at the door, the owner of the boat entered. He stated his readiness to take us across in the morning; he would knock us up shortly after dawn; but as he and his companions had no friends in the place, they would, of course, have to pay for their beds and their breakfasts before they sailed; "an' she was shure the shentlemens waana expect her to pay the same." With a heavy heart I satisfied the cormorant. He insisted on being paid his full hire before he left Jean-Town, too! Before turning in, I looked what o'clock. One in the morning! In three hours M'Ian will be waiting in his galley at the head of Eishart's Loch. Unfortunates that we are!

At least, thought I when I awoke, there is satisfaction in accomplishing something quite peculiar. There are many men in the world who have performed extraordinary actions; but Fellowes and myself may boast, without fear of contradiction, that we are the only travellers who ever arrived at Plockton. Looking to the rottenness of most reputations nowadays, our feat is distinction sufficient for the ambition of a private man. We ought

to be made lions of when we return to the abodes of civilisation. I have heard certain beasts roar, seen them wag their tails to the admiration of beholders, and all on account of a slighter matter than that we wot of. Who, pray, is the pale gentleman with the dishevelled locks, yonder, in the flower-bed of ladies, to whom every face turns? What! don't you know? The last new poet; author of the "Universe." Splendid performance. Pooh! a reed shaken by the wind. Look at us. We are the men who arrived at Plockton! But, heavens! the boatmen should have been here ere this. Alarmed, I sprang out of bed, clothed in haste, burst into Fellowes' room, turned him out, and then proceeded down stairs. No information could be procured, nobody had seen our crew. That morning they had not called at the house. After a while a fisherman sauntered in, and in consideration of certain stimulants to be supplied by us, admitted that our fellows were acquaintances of his own; that they had started at day-break, and would now be far on their way to Jean-Town. The scoundrels, so overpaid too! Well, well, there's another world. With some difficulty we

gathered from our friend that a ferry from the mainland to Skye existed at some inconceivable distance across the hills, and that a boat perhaps might be had there. But how was the ferry to be reached? No conveyance could be had at the inn. We instantly despatched scouts to every point of the compass to hunt for a wheeled vehicle. At height of noon our messengers returned with the information that neither gig, cart, nor wheelbarrow could be had on any terms. What *was* to be done? I was smitten by a horrible sense of helplessness; it seemed as if I were doomed to abide for ever in that dreary place, girdled by these gray rocks scooped and honey-combed by the washing of the bitter seas—were cut off from friends, profession, and delights of social intercourse, as if spirited away to fairyland. I felt myself growing a fisherman, like the men about me; Gaelic seemed forming on my tongue. Fellowes, meanwhile, with that admirable practical philosophy of his, had lit a cigar, and was chatting away with the landlady about the population of the village, the occupations of the inhabitants, their ecclesiastical history. I awoke from my gloomy dream

as she replied to a question of his—"The last minister was put awa for drinkin'; but we 've got a new ane, a Mr Cammil, an' verra weel liket he is." The words were a ray of light, and suggested a possible deliverance. I slapped him on the shoulder, crying, "I have it! There was a fellow-student of mine in Glasgow, a Mr Donald Campbell, and it runs in my mind that he was preferred to a parish in the Highlands somewhere; what if this should prove the identical man? Let us call upon him." The chances were not very much in our favour; but our circumstances were desperate, and the thing was worth trying. The landlady sent her son with us to point the way. We knocked, were admitted, and shown to the tiny drawing-room. While waiting, I observed a couple of photograph cases on the table. These I opened. One contained the portrait of a gentleman in a white neckcloth, evidently a clergyman; the other that of a lady, in all likelihood his spouse. Alas! the gentleman bore no resemblance to *my* Mr Campbell: the lady I did not know. I laid the cases down in disappointment, and began to frame an apology for our singular intrusion, when

the door opened—and my old friend entered. He greeted us cordially, and I wrung his hand with fervour. I told him our adventure with the Jean-Town boatmen, and our consequent helplessness; at which he laughed, and offered his cart to convey ourselves and luggage to Kyleakin ferry, which turned out to be only six miles off. Genial talk about college scenes and old associates brought on the hour of luncheon; that concluded, the cart was at the door. In it our things were placed; farewells were uttered, and we departed. It was a wild, picturesque road along which we moved; sometimes comparatively smooth, but more frequently rough and stony, as the dry torrent's bed. Black dreary wastes spread around. Here and there we passed a colony of turf-huts, out of which wild ragged children, tawny as Indians, came trooping, to stare upon us as we passed. But the journey was attractive enough; for before us rose a permanent vision of mighty hills, with their burdens of cloudy rack; and every now and then, from an eminence, we could mark, against the land, the blue of the sea flowing in, bright with sunlight. We were once more on our way; the

minister's mare went merrily; the breeze came keen and fresh against us; and in less than a couple of hours we reached Kyleakin.

The ferry is a narrow passage between the mainland and Skye; the current is powerful there, difficult to pull against on gusty days; and the ferrymen are loath to make the attempt unless well remunerated. When we arrived, we found four passengers waiting to cross; and as their appearance gave prospect of an insufficient supply of coin, they were left sitting on the bleak windy rocks until some others should come up. It was as easy to pull across for ten shillings as for two! One was a girl, who had been in service in the south, had taken ill there, and was on her way home to some wretched turf-hut on the hill-side, in all likelihood to die; the second a little cheery Irishwoman, with a basketful of paper ornaments, with the gaudy colours and ingenious devices of which she hoped to tickle the æsthetic sensibilities, and open the purses, of the Gael. The third and fourth were men, apparently laborious ones; but the younger informed me he was a schoolmaster, and it came out incidentally in conversation that his

schoolhouse was a turf-cabin, his writing-table a trunk, on which his pupils wrote by turns. Imagination sees his young kilted friends kneeling on the clay floor, laboriously forming pot-hooks there, and squinting horribly the while. The ferrymen began to bestir themselves when we came up; and in a short time the boat was ready, and the party embarked. The craft was crank, and leaked abominably, but there was no help; and our bags were deposited in the bottom. The schoolmaster worked an oar in lieu of payment. The little Irishwoman, with her precious basket, sat high in the bow, the labourer and the sick girl behind us at the stern. With a strong pull of the oars we shot out into the seething water. In a moment the Irishwoman is brought out in keen relief against a cloud of spray; but, nothing daunted, she laughs out merrily, and seems to consider a ducking the funniest thing in the world. In another, I receive a slap in the face from a gush of blue water, and emerge, half-blinded, and soaked from top to toe. Ugh, this sea-waltz is getting far from pleasant. The leak is increasing fast, and our carpet-bags are well-nigh afloat in the working

bilge. We are all drenched now. The girl is sick, and Fellowes is assisting her from his brandy-flask. The little Irishwoman, erst so cheery and gay, with spirits that turned every circumstance into a quip and crank, has sunk in a heap at the bow; her basket is exposed, and the ornaments, shaped by patient fingers out of coloured papers, are shapeless now; the looped rosettes are ruined; her stock-in-trade, pulp—a misfortune great to her as defeat to an army, or a famine to a kingdom. But we are more than half-way across, and a little ahead the water is comparatively smooth. The boatmen pull with greater ease; the uncomfortable sensation at the pit of the stomach is redressed; the white lips of the girl begin to redden somewhat; and the bunch forward stirs itself, and exhibits signs of life. Fellowes bought up the contents of her basket; and a contribution of two-and-sixpence from myself made the widow's heart to sing aloud for joy. On landing, our luggage is conveyed in a cart to the inn, and waits our arrival there. Meanwhile we warm our chilled limbs with a caulker of Glenlivet. "Blessings be with it, and eternal praise." How the fine

spirit melts into the wandering blood, like "a purer light in light!" How the soft benignant fire streams through the labyrinthine veins, from brain to toe! The sea is checkmated; the heart beats with a fuller throb; and the impending rheumatism flies afar. When we reached the inn, we seized our luggage, in the hope of procuring dry garments. Alas! when I went up-stairs, mine might have been the carpet-bag of a merman; it was wet to the inmost core.

Soaked to the skin, it was our interest to proceed without delay. We waited on the landlord, and desired a conveyance. The landlord informed us that the only vehicle which he possessed was a phæton, at present on hire till the evening, and advised us, now that it was Saturday, to remain in his establishment till Monday, when he could send us on comfortably. To wait till Monday, however, would never do. We told the man our story, how for two days we had been the sport of fortune, tossed hither and thither; but he—feeling he had us in his power—would render no assistance. We wandered out toward the rocks to hold a consultation, and had almost resolved to leave our things

where they were, and start on foot, when a son of the innkeeper's joined us. He—whether cognisant of his parent's statement, I cannot say—admitted that there were a horse and gig in the stable; that he knew Mr M'Ian's place, and offered to drive us to a little fishing village within three miles of it, where our things could be left, and a cart sent to bring them up in the evening. The charge was —never mind what!—but we closed with it at once. We entered the inn while our friend went round to the stable to bring the machine to the door; met the landlord on the stairs, sent an indignant broadside into him, which he received with the utmost coolness. The imperturbable man! he swallowed our shot like a sandbank, and was nothing the worse. The horse was now at the door, in a few moments our luggage was stowed away, and we were off. Through seventeen miles of black moorland we drove almost without beholding a single dwelling. Sometimes, although rarely, we had a glimpse of the sea. The chief object that broke the desolation was a range of clumsy red hills, stretching away like a chain of gigantic dust-heaps. Their aspect was singularly dreary and depressing.

They were mountain *plebs*. Lava hardens into grim precipice, bristles into jagged ridge, along which the rack drives, now hiding, now revealing it; but these had no beauty, no terror, ignoble from the beginning; dull offspring of primeval mud. About seven P.M. we reached the village, left our things, still soaked in sea-water, in one of the huts, till Mr M'Ian could send for them, and struck off on foot for the three miles which we were told yet remained. By this time the country had improved in appearance. The hills were swelling and green; up these the road wound, fringed with ferns, mixed with the purple bells of the foxglove. A stream, too, evidently escaped from some higher mountain tarn, came dashing along in a succession of tiny waterfalls. A quiet pastoral region, but so still, so deserted! Hardly a house, hardly a human being! After a while we reached the lake, half covered with water-lilies, and our footsteps startled a brood of wild-ducks on its breast. How lonely it looked in its dark hollow there, familiar to the cry of the wild bird, the sultry summer-cloud, the stars and meteors of the night—strange to human faces, and the sound

of human voices. But what of our three miles? We have been walking for an hour and a half. Are we astray in the green wilderness? The idea is far from pleasant. Happily a youthful native came trotting along, and of him we inquired our way. The boy looked at us, and shook his head. We repeated the question, still the same shy puzzled look. A proffer of a shilling, however, quickened his apprehension, and returning with us a few paces, he pointed out a hill-road striking up through the moor. On asking the distance, he seemed put out for a moment, and then muttered, in his difficult English, "Four mile." Nothing more could be procured in the way of information; so off went little Bare-legs, richer than ever he had been in his life, at a long swinging trot, which seemed his natural pace, and which, I suppose, he could sustain from sunrise to sunset. To this hill-road we now addressed ourselves. It was sunset now. Up we went through the purple moor, and in a short time sighted a crimson tarn, bordered with long black rushes, and as we approached, a duck burst from its face on "squattering" wings, shaking the splendour into widening circles. Just

then two girls came on the road with peats in their laps: anxious for information, we paused—they, shy as heath-hens, darted past, and, when fifty yards' distant, wheeled suddenly round, and burst into shrieks of laughter, repeated and re-repeated. In no laughing mood we pursued our way. The road now began to dip, and we entered a glen plentifully covered with birchwood, a stream keeping us company from the tarn above. The sun was now down, and objects at a distance began to grow uncertain in the evening mist. The horrible idea that we had lost our way, and were doomed to encamp on the heather, grew upon us. On! on! We had walked six miles since our encounter with the false Bare-legs. Suddenly we heard a dog bark; that was a sign of humanity, and our spirits rose. Then we saw a troop of horses galloping along the bottom of the glen. Better and better. "'Twas an honest ghost, Horatio!" All at once we heard the sound of voices, and Fellowes declared he saw something moving on the road. The next moment M'Ian and a couple of shepherds started out of the gloom. At sight of them our hearts burned within us, like a newly-poked

fire. Sincere was the greeting, immense the shaking of hands; and the story of our adventures kept us merry till we reached the house.

Of our doughty deeds at supper I will not sing, nor state how the toddy-jugs were drained. Rather let me tell of those who sat with us at the board—the elder Mr M'Ian, and Father M'Crimmon, then living in the house. Mr M'Ian, senior, was a man past eighty, but fresh and hale for his years. His figure was slight and wiry, his face a fresh pink, his hair like snow. Age, though it had bowed him somewhat, had not been able to steal the fire from his eye, nor the vigour from his limbs. He entered the army at an early age; carried colours in Ireland before the century came in; was with Moore at Corunna; followed Wellington through the Peninsular battles; was with the 42d at Quatre Bras, and hurt there when the brazen cuirassiers came charging through the tall rye-grass; and, finally, stood at Waterloo in a square that crumbled before the artillery and cavalry charges of Napoleon—crumbled, but never flinched! It was strange to think that the old man across the table breathed the same air with Marie-Antoinette; saw

the black cloud of the French Revolution torn to pieces with its own lightnings, the eagles of Napoleon flying from Madrid to Moscow, Wellington's victorious career—all that wondrous time which our fathers and grandfathers saw, which has become history now, wearing the air of antiquity almost. We look upon the ground out yonder from Brussels, that witnessed the struggle; but what the insensate soil, the woods, the monument, to the living eye in which was pictured the fierce strife? to the face that was grimed with the veritable battle-smoke? to the voice that mingled in the last cheer, when the whole English line moved forward at sunset? M'Ian was an isle-man of the old school; penetrated through every drop of blood with pride of birth, and with a sense of honour which was like a second conscience. He had all the faults incidental to such a character. He was stubborn as the gnarled trunk of the oak, full of prejudices which our enlightenment laughs at, but which we need not despise, for with our knowledge and our science, well will it be for us if we go to our graves with as stainless a name. He was quick and hasty of temper, and contradiction

brought fire from him like steel from flint. Short and fierce were his gusts of passion. I have seen him of an evening, with quivering hands and kindling eye, send a volley of oaths into a careless servant, and the next moment almost the reverend white head was bowed on his chair as he knelt at evening prayer. Of these faults, however, this evening we saw nothing. The old gentleman was kind and hospitable; full of talk, but his talk seemed to us of old-world things. On Lords Palmerston and Derby he was silent; he was eloquent on Mr Pitt and Mr Fox. He talked of the French Revolution and the actors thereof as contemporaries. Of the good Queen Victoria (for history is sure to call her that) he said nothing. His heart was with his memory, in the older days when George III. was king, and not an old king neither.

Father M'Crimmon was a tall man, being in height considerably above six feet. He was thin, like his own island, where the soil is washed away by the rain, leaving bare the rock. His face was mountainously bony, with great pits and hollows in it. His eyes were gray, and had that depth of

melancholy in them which is so often observed in men of his order. In heart he was simple as a child; in discourse slow, measured, and stately. There was something in his appearance that suggested the silence and solitude of the wilderness; of hours lonely to the heart, and bare spaces lonely to the eye. Although of another, and—as I think, else I should not profess it—a purer faith, I respected him at first, and loved him almost when I came to know him. Was it wonderful that his aspect was sorrowful, that it wore a wistful look, as if he had lost something which could never be regained, and that for evermore the sunshine was stolen from his smile? He was by his profession cut off from all the sweet ties of human nature, from all love of wife or child. His people were widely scattered: across the black moor, far up the hollow glens, blustering with winds or dimmed with the rain-cloud. Thither the grim man followed them, officiating on rare festival occasions of marriage and christening; his face bright, not like a window ruddy with a fire within, rather like a wintry pane tinged by the setting sun—a brief splendour that warms not, and but divides the long cold day

that has already passed from the long cold night to come. More frequently he was engaged dispensing alms, giving advice in disaster, waiting by the low pallets of the fever-stricken, listening to the confession of long-hoarded guilt, comforting the dark spirit as it passed to its audit. It is not with viands like these you furnish forth life's banquet; not on materials like these you rear brilliant spirits and gay manners. He who looks constantly on death and suffering, and the unspiritual influences of hopeless poverty, becomes infected with congenial gloom. Yet cold and cheerless as may be his life, he has his reward; for in his wanderings through the glens there is not an eye but brightens at his approach, not a mourner but feels he has a sharer in his sorrow; and when the tall, bony, seldom-smiling man is borne at last to his grave, round many a fireside will tears fall and prayers be said for the good priest M'Crimmon.

All night sitting there, we talked of strange

> "Unhappy far-off things,
> And battles long ago,"

blood-crusted clan quarrels, bitter wrongs and terrible revenges: of wraiths and bodings, and pale

death-lights burning on the rocks. The conversation was straightforward and earnest, conducted with perfect faith in the subject-matter; and I listened, I am not ashamed to confess, with a curious and not altogether unpleasant thrill of the blood. For, I suppose, however sceptical as to ghosts the intellect may be, the blood is ever a believer as it runs chill through the veins. A new world and order of things seemed to gather round us as we sat there. One was carried away from all that makes up the present—the policy of Napoleon III., the death of President Lincoln, the character of his successor, the universal babblement of scandal and personal talk—and brought face to face with tradition; with the ongoings of men who lived in solitary places, whose ears were constantly filled with the *sough* of the wind, the clash of the wave on the rock; whose eyes were open on the flinty cliff, and the floating forms of mists, and the dead silence of pale sky dipping down far off on the dead silence of black moor. One was taken at once from the city streets to the houseless wilderness; from the smoky sky to the blue desert of air stretching from mountain range to mountain range, with the poised eagle

hanging in the midst, stationary as a lamp. Perhaps it was the faith of the speakers that impressed me most. To them the stories were much a matter of course; the supernatural atmosphere had become so familiar to them that it had been emptied of all its wonder and the greater part of its terror. Of this I am quite sure, that a ghost story, told in the pit of a theatre, or at Vauxhall, or walking through a lighted London street, is quite a different thing from a ghost story told, as I heard it, in a lone Highland dwelling, cut off from every habitation by eight miles of gusty wind, the sea within a hundred feet of the walls, the tumble of the big wave, and the rattle of the pebbles, as it washes away back again, distinctly heard where you sit, and the talkers making the whole matter "stuff o' the conscience." Very different! You laugh in the theatre, and call the narrator an ass; in the other case you listen silently, with a scalp creeping as if there were a separate life in it, and the blood streaming coldly down the back.

Young M'Ian awoke me next morning. As I came down stairs he told me, had it not been

Sunday he would have roused me with a performance on the bagpipes. Heaven forfend! I never felt so sincere a Sabbatarian. He led me some little distance to a favourable point of rock, and, lo! across a sea, sleek as satin, rose a range of hills, clear against the morning, jagged and notched like an old sword-blade. "Yonder," said he, pointing, "beyond the black mass in front, just where the shower is falling, lies Lake Coruisk. I'll take you to see it one of these days."

AT MR M'IAN'S.

THE farm which Mr M'Ian rented was, in comparison with many others in the island, of but moderate extent; and yet it skirted the sea-shore for a considerable distance, and comprised within itself many a rough hill, and many a green valley. The house was old-fashioned, was *harled* all over with lime, and contained a roomy porch, over which ivies clustered, a dining-room, a drawing-room, a lot of bedrooms, and behind, and built out from the house, an immense kitchen, with a flagged floor and a huge fire-place. A whole colony of turf-huts, with films of blue smoke issuing from each, were scattered along the shore, lending a sort of homely beauty to the wild picturesqueness. Beside the house, with a ruined summer-seat at one end, was a large carelessly-kept garden, surrounded by a high stone wall. M'Ian kept the key himself; and on the garden door were nailed ravens, and other

feathered malefactors in different stages of decay. Within a stone's throw from the porch, were one or two barns, a stable, a wool-house, and other out-houses, in which several of the servants slept. M'Ian was careful of social degree, and did not admit every one to his dining-room. He held his interviews with the common people in the open air in front of the house. When a drover came for cattle he dined solitarily in the porch, and the dishes were sent to him from M'Ian's table. The drover was a servant, consequently he could not sit at meat with my friend; he was more than a servant for the nonce, inasmuch as he was his master's representative, and consequently he could not be sent to the kitchen—the porch was therefore a kind of convenient middle place; neither too high nor too humble, it was, in fact, a sort of social purgatory. But Mr M'Ian did not judge a man by the coat he wore, nor by the amount of money in his purse. When Mr Macara, therefore, the superannuated schoolmaster, who might have been a licentiate of the Church thirty years before, had he not brought his studies in divinity to a close by falling in love, marrying,

and becoming the father of a large family; or when Peter, the meek-faced violinist, who was of good descent, being the second cousin of a knight-bachelor on his mother's side, and of an Indian general on his father's—when these men called at the house, they dined — with obvious trepidation, and sitting at an inconvenient distance, so that a morsel was occasionally lost on its passage from plate to mouth—at M'Ian's own table; and to them the old gentleman, who would have regarded the trader worth a million as nothing better than a scullion, talked of the old families and the old times. M'Ian valued a man for the sake of his grandfather rather than for the sake of himself. The shepherds, the shepherds' dogs, and the domestic servants, dined in the large kitchen. The kitchen was the most picturesque apartment in the house. There was a huge dresser near the small dusty window; in a dark corner stood a great cupboard in which crockery was stowed away. The walls and rafters were black with peat smoke. Dogs were continually sleeping on the floor with their heads resting on their outstretched paws; and from a frequent start and

whine, you knew that in dream they were chasing a flock of sheep along the steep hill-side, their masters shouting out orders to them from the valley beneath. The fleeces of sheep which had been found dead on the mountain were nailed on the walls to dry. Braxy hams were suspended from the roof; strings of fish were hanging above the fire-place. The door was almost continually open, for by the door light mainly entered. Amid a savoury steam of broth and potatoes, the shepherds and domestic servants drew in long backless forms to the table, and dined innocent of knife and fork, the dogs snapping and snarling among their legs; and when the meal was over the dogs licked the platters. Macara, who was something of a poet, would, on his occasional visits, translate Gaelic poems for me. On one occasion, after one of these translations had been read, I made the remark that a similar set of ideas occurred in one of the songs of Burns. His gray eyes immediately blazed up; he rushed into a Gaelic recitation of considerable length; and, at its close, snapping defiant fingers in my face, demanded, "Can you produce anything out of your

Shakespeare or your Burns equal to *that?*" Of course, I could not; and I fear I aggravated my original offence by suggesting that in all likelihood my main inability to produce a passage of corresponding excellence from the southern authors arose from my entire ignorance of the language of the native bard. When Peter came with his violin the kitchen was cleared after nightfall; the forms were taken away, candles stuck into the battered tin sconces, the dogs unceremoniously kicked out, and a somewhat ample ballroom was the result. Then in came the girls, with black shoes and white stockings, newly-washed faces and nicely-smoothed hair; and with them came the shepherds and men-servants, more carefully attired than usual. Peter took his seat near the fire; M'Ian gave the signal by clapping his hands; up went the inspiriting notes of the fiddle and away went the dancers, man and maid facing each other, the girl's feet twinkling beneath her petticoat, not like two mice, but rather like a dozen; her kilted partner pounding the flag-floor unmercifully; then man and maid changed step, and followed each other through loops and chains; then they faced each

other again, the man whooping, the girl's hair coming down with her exertions; then suddenly the fiddle changed time, and with a cry the dancers rushed at each other, each pair getting linked arm in arm, and away the whole floor dashed into the whirlwind of the reel of Hoolichan. It was dancing with a will,—lyrical, impassioned; the strength of a dozen fiddlers dwelt in Peter's elbow; M'Ian clapped his hands and shouted, and the stranger was forced to mount the dresser to get out of the way of whirling kilt and tempestuous petticoat.

Chief amongst the dancers on these occasions were John Kelly, Lachlan Roy, and Angus-with-the-dogs. John Kelly was M'Ian's principal shepherd — a swarthy fellow, of Irish descent, I fancy, and of infinite wind, endurance, and capacity of drinking whisky. He was a solitary creature, irascible in the extreme; he crossed and re-crossed the farm I should think some dozen times every day, and was never seen at church or market without his dog. With his dog only was John Kelly intimate, and on perfectly confidential terms. I often wondered what were his thoughts

as he wandered through the glens at early morning, and saw the fiery mists upstreaming from the shoulders of Blaavin; or when he sat on a sunny knoll at noon smoking a black broken pipe, and watching his dog bringing a flock of sheep down the opposite hill-side. Whatever they were, John kept them strictly to himself. In the absorption of whisky he was without a peer in my experience, although I have in my time encountered some rather distinguished practitioners in that art. If you gave John a glass of spirits, there was a flash, and it was gone. For a wager I once beheld him drink a bottle of whisky in ten minutes. He drank it in cupfuls, saying never a word. When it was finished, he wrapt himself in his plaid, went out with his dog, and slept all night on the hill-side. I suppose a natural instinct told him that the night air would decompose the alcohol for him. When he came in next morning his swarthy face was a shade paler than was its wont; but he seemed to suffer no uneasiness, and he tackled to his breakfast like a man.

Lachlan Roy was a little cheery, agile, red squirrel of a man, and like the squirrel, he had a

lot of nuts stowed away in a secret hole against the winter time. A more industrious little creature I have never met. He lived near the old castle of Dunsciach, where he rented a couple of crofts or so; there he fed his score or two of sheep, and his half dozen of black cattle; and from thence he drove them to Broadford market twice or thrice in the year, where they were sure to fetch good prices. He knew the points of a sheep or a stirk as well as any man in the island. He was about forty-five, had had a wife and children, but they had all died years before; and although a widower, Lachlan was as jolly, as merry-eyed and merry-hearted as any young bachelor shepherd in the country. He was a kindly soul too, full of pity, and was constantly performing charitable offices for his neighbours in distress. A poor woman in his neighbourhood had lost her suckling child, and Lachlan came up to M'Ian's house with tears in his eyes, seeking some simple cordials and a bottle of wine. "Ay, it's a sad thing, Mr M'Ian," he went on, "when death takes a child from the breast. A full breast and an empty knee, Mr M'Ian, makes a desolate house. Poor

Mirren has a terrible rush of milk, and cold is the lip to-day that could relieve her. And she's all alone too, Mr M'Ian, for her husband is at Stornoway after the herring." Of course he got the cordials and the wine, and of course, in as short a space of time as was possible, the poor mother, seated on an upturned creel, and rocking herself to and fro over her clasped hands, got them also, with what supplementary aid Lachlan's own stores could afford. Lachlan was universally respected; and when he appeared every door opened cheerfully. At all dance gatherings at M'Ian's he was certain to be present; and old as he was comparatively, the prettiest girl was glad to have him for a partner. He had a merry wit, and when he joked, blushes and titterings overspread in a moment all the young women's faces. On such occasions I have seen John Kelly sitting in a corner gloomily biting his nails, jealousy eating his heart. But Lachlan cared nothing for John's mutinous countenance—he meant no harm, and he feared no man. Lachlan Roy, being interpreted, means red Lachlan; and this cognomen not only drew its appropriateness from the colour of his hair

and beard; it had, as I afterwards learned, a yet deeper significance. Lachlan, if the truth must be told, had nearly as fierce a thirst for strong waters as John Kelly himself, and that thirst on fair days, after he had sold his cattle at Broadford, he was wont plentifully to slake. His face, under the influence of liquor, became red as a harvest moon; and as of this physiological peculiarity in himself he had the most perfect knowledge, he was under the impression that if he drew rein on this side of high alcoholic inflammation of countenance he was safe, and on the whole rather creditably virtuous than otherwise. And so, perhaps, he would have been, had he been able to judge for himself, or had he been placed amongst boon companions who were ignorant of his weakness, or who did not wish to deceive him. Somewhat suspicious, when a fresh jorum was placed on the table, he would call out—"Donald, is my face red yet?" Donald, who was perfectly aware of the ruddy illumination, would hypocritically reply, "Hoot, Lachlan dear, what are ye speaking about? Your face is just its own natural colour. What should it be red for?"

"Duncan, you scoundrel," he would cry fiercely at a later period, bringing his clenched fist down on the table, and making the glasses dance—"Duncan, you scoundrel, look me in the face!" Thus adjured, Duncan would turn his uncertain optics on his flaming friend. "Is my face red yet, Duncan?" Duncan, too far gone for speech, would shake his head in the gravest manner, plainly implying that the face in question was *not* red, and that there was not the least likelihood that it would ever become red. And so, from trust in the veracity of his fellows, Lachlan was, at Broadford, brought to bitter grief twice or thrice in the year.

Angus-with-the-dogs was continually passing over the country like the shadow of a cloud. If he had a home at all, it was situated at Ardvasar, near Armadale; but there Angus was found but seldom. He was always wandering about with his gun over his shoulder, his terriers, Spoineag and Fruich, at his heels, and the kitchen of every tacksman was open to him. The tacksmen paid Angus so much per annum, and Angus spent his time in killing their vermin. He was a dead

shot; he knew the hole of the fox, and the cairn in which an otter would be found. If you wanted a brace of young falcons, Angus would procure them for you; if ravens were breeding on one of your cliffs, you had but to wait till the young ones were half-fledged, send for Angus, and before evening the entire brood, father and mother included, would be nailed on your barn door. He knew the seldom-visited loch up amongst the hills which was haunted by the swan, the cliff of the Cuchullins on which the eagles dwelt, the place where, by moonlight, you could get a shot at the shy heron. He knew all the races of dogs. In the warm blind pup he saw, at a glance, the future terrier or staghound. He could cure the distemper, could crop ears and dock tails. He could cunningly plait all kinds of fishing tackle; could carve *quaichs*, and work you curiously-patterned dagger-hilts out of the black bog-oak. If you wished a tobacco-pouch made of the skin of an otter or a seal, you had simply to apply to Angus. From his variety of accomplishment he was an immense favourite. The old farmers liked him because he was the sworn foe of pole-cats,

foxes, and ravens; the sons of farmers valued him because he was an authority in rifles and fowling-pieces, and knew the warm shelving rocks on which bullet-headed seals slept, and the cairns on the sea-shore in which otters lived; and because if any special breed of dog was wanted he was sure to meet the demand. He was a little, thick-set fellow, of great physical strength, and of the most obliging nature; and he was called Angus-with-the-dogs, because without Spoineag and Fruich at his heels, he was never seen. The pipe was always in his mouth,—to him tobacco smoke was as much a matter of course as peat reek is to a turf-hut.

One day, after Fellowes had gone to the Landlord's, where I was to join him in a week or ten days, young M'Ian and myself waited for Angus-with-the-dogs on one of the rising grounds at a little distance from the house. Angus in his peregrinations had marked a cairn in which he thought an otter would be found, and it was resolved that this cairn should be visited on a specified day about noon, in the hope that some little sport might be provided for the Sassenach. About eleven A.M.,

therefore, on the specified day we lay on the heather smoking. It was warm and sunny; M'Ian had thrown beside him on the heather his gun and shot-belt, and lay back luxuriously on his fragrant couch, meerschaum in mouth, his Glengary bonnet tilted forward over his eyes, his left leg stretched out, his right drawn up, and his brown hands clasped round the knee. Of my own position, which was comfortable enough, I was not at the moment specially cognisant; my attention being absorbed by the scenery around, which was wild and strange. We lay on couches of purple heather, as I have said; and behind were the sloping birch-woods—birch-woods always remind one somehow of woods in their teens—which ran up to the bases of white cliffs traversed only by the shepherd and the shadows of hawks and clouds. The plateau on which we lay ran toward the sea, and suddenly broke down to it in little ravines and gorges, beautifully grassed and mossed, and plumed with bunches of ferns. Occasionally a rivulet came laughing and dancing down from rocky shelf to shelf. Of course, from the spot where we lay, this breaking down

of the hill-face was invisible, but it was in my mind's eye all the same, for I had sailed along the coast and admired it a couple of days before. Right in front flowed in Loch Eishart, with its islands and white sea-birds. Down in the right-hand corner, reduced in size by distance, the house sat on its knoll, like a white shell; and beside it were barns and outhouses, the smoking turf-huts on the shore, the clumps of birch-wood, the thread of a road which ran down toward the stream from the house, crossed it by a bridge a little beyond the turf-huts and the boat-shed, and then came up towards us till it was lost in the woods. Right across the Loch were the round red hills that rise above Broadford; and the entire range of the Cuchullins—the outline wild, splintered, jagged, as if drawn by a hand shaken by terror or frenzy. A glittering mesh of sunlight stretched across the Loch, blinding, palpitating, ever-dying, ever-renewed. The bee came booming past, the white sea-gull swept above, silent as a thought or a dream. Gazing out on all this, somewhat lost in it, I was suddenly startled by a sharp whistle, and then I noticed that a figure

was crossing the bridge below. M'Ian got up; "That's Angus," he said; "let us go down to meet him;" and so, after knocking the ashes out of his pipe and filling it anew, picking up his gun and slinging his shot-belt across his shoulder, he led the way.

At the bridge we found Angus seated, with his gun across his knee, and Spoineag and Fruich coursing about, and beating the bushes, from which a rabbit would occasionally bounce and scurry off. Angus looked more alert and intelligent than I had ever before seen him—probably because he had business on hand. We started at once along the shore at the foot of the cliffs above which we had been lying half an hour before. Our way lay across large boulders which had rolled down from the heights above, and progression, at least to one unaccustomed to such rough work, was by no means easy. Angus and M'Ian stepped on lightly enough, the dogs kept up a continual barking and yelping, and were continually disappearing in rents and crannies in the cliffs, and emerging more ardent than ever. At a likely place Angus would stop

for a moment, speak a word or two to the dogs, and then they rushed barking at every orifice, entered with a struggle, and ranged through all the passages of the hollow cairn. As yet the otter had not been found at home. At last when we came in view of a spur of the higher ground which, breaking down on the shore, terminated in a sort of pyramid of loose stones, Angus dashed across the broken boulders at a run, followed by his dogs. When they got up, Spoineag and Fruich, barking as they had never barked before, crept in at all kinds of holes and impossible fissures, and were no sooner out than they were again in. Angus cheered and encouraged them, and pointed out to M'Ian traces of the otter's presence. I sat down on a stone and watched the behaviour of the terriers. If ever there was an insane dog, it was Fruich that day; she jumped and barked, and got into the cairn by holes through which no other dog could go, and came out by holes through which no other dog could come. Spoineag, on the other hand, was comparatively composed; he would occasionally sit down, and taking a critical view of the cairn, run barking to

a new point, and to that point Fruich would rush like a fury and disappear. Spoineag was a commander-in-chief, Fruich was a gallant general of division. Spoineag was Wellington, Fruich was the fighting Picton. Fruich had disappeared for a time, and from the muffled barking we concluded she was working her way to the centre of the citadel, when all at once Spoineag, as if moved by a sudden inspiration, rushed to the top of the cairn, and began tearing up the turf with teeth and feet. Spoineag's eagerness now was as intense as ever Fruich's had been. Angus, who had implicit faith in Spoineag's genius, climbed up to assist, and tore away at the turf with his hands. In a minute or so Spoineag had effected an entrance from the top, and began to work his way downwards. Angus stood up against the sky with his gun in readiness. We could hear the dogs barking inside, and evidently approaching a common centre, when all at once a fell tumult arose. The otter was reached at last, and was using teeth and claws. Angus made a signal to M'Ian, who immediately brought his gun to his shoulder. The combat still raged within, and

seemed to be coming nearer. Once Fruich came out howling with a bleeding foot, but a cry from Angus on the height sent her in again. All at once the din of barking ceased, and I saw a black lurching object flit past the stones towards the sea. Crack went M'Ian's gun from the boulder, crack went Angus's gun from the height, and the black object turned half round suddenly and then lay still. It was the otter; and the next moment Spoineag and Fruich were out upon it, the fire of battle in their eyes, and their teeth fixed in its bloody throat. They dragged the carcase backwards and forwards, and seemed unable to sate their rage upon it. What ancient animosity existed between the families of otters and terriers? What wrong had been done never to be redressed? Angus came forward at last, sent Spoineag and Fruich howling right and left with his foot, seized the otter by the tail, and then over the rough boulders we began our homeward march. Our progress past the turf-huts nestling on the shore at the foot of the cliffs was a triumphal one. Old men, women, and brown half-naked children came out to gaze upon us. When we got home the otter

was laid on the grass in front of the house, where the elder M'Ian came out to inspect it, and was polite enough to express his approval, and to declare that it was not much inferior in bulk and strength to the otters he had hunted and killed at the close of last century. After dinner young M'Ian skinned his trophy, and nailed and stretched the hide on the garden gate amid the dilapidated kites and ravens. In the evening, Angus, with his gun across his shoulder, and Spoineag and Fruich at his heels, started for that mysterious home of his which was supposed to be at Ardvasar, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Armadale Castle.

A visit to Loch Coruisk had for some little time been meditated; and in the evening of the day on which the otter was slain the boat was dragged from its shed down towards the sea, launched, and brought round to the rude pier, where it was moored for the night. We went to bed early, for we were to rise with the sun. We got up, breakfasted, and went down to the pier where two or three sturdy fellows were putting oars and rowlocks to rights, tumbling in huge stones for bal-

last, and carefully stowing away a couple of guns and a basket of provisions. In about an hour we were fairly afloat; the broad-backed fellows bent to their oars, and soon the house began to dwindle in the distance, the irregular winding shores to gather into compact masses, and the white cliffs, which we knew to be a couple of miles inland, to come strangely forward, and to overhang the house and the surrounding stripes of pasturage and clumps of birchwood. On a fine morning there is not in the whole world a prettier sheet of water than Loch Eishart. Everything about it is wild, beautiful, and lonely. You drink a strange and unfamiliar air. You seem to be sailing out of the nineteenth century away back into the ninth. You are delighted, and there is no remembered delight with which you can compare the feeling. Over the Loch the Cuchullins rise crested with tumult of golden mists; the shores are green behind; and away out, towards the horizon, the Island of Rum—ten miles long at the least—shoots up from the flat sea like a pointed flame. It is a granite mass, you know, firm as the foundations of the world; but as you gaze

the magic of morning light makes it a glorious apparition—a mere crimson film or shadow, so intangible in appearance you might almost suppose it to exist on sufferance, and that a breath could blow it away. Between Rum, fifteen miles out yonder, and the shores drawing together and darkening behind, with the white cliffs coming forward to stare after us, the sea is smooth, and flushed with more varied hues than ever lived on the changing opal—dim azures, tender pinks, sleek emeralds. It is one sheet of mother-of-pearl. The hills are silent. The voice of man has not yet awoke on their heathery slopes. But the sea, literally clad with birds, is vociferous. They make plenty of noise at their work, these fellows. Darkly the cormorant shoots across our track. The air is filled with a confused medley of sweet, melancholy, and querulous notes. As we proceed, a quick head ducks; a troop of birds sinks suddenly to reappear far behind, or perhaps strips off the surface of the water, taking wing with a shrill cry of complaint. Occasionally, too, a porpoise, or "fish that hugest swims the ocean stream," heaves itself slowly out

of the element, its wet sides flashing for a moment in the sunlight, and then heeling lazily over, sinks with never a ripple. As we approached the Strathaird coast, M'Ian sat high in the bow smoking, and covering with his gun every now and again some bird which came wheeling near, while the boatmen joked, and sang snatches of many-chorused songs. As the coast behind became gradually indistinct, the coast in front grew bolder and bolder. You let your hand over the side of the boat and play listlessly with the water. You are lapped in a dream of other days. Your heart is chanting ancient verses and sagas. The northern sea wind that filled the sails of the Vikings, and lifted their locks of tarnished gold, is playing in your hair. And when the keel grates on the pebbles at Kilmaree you are brought back to your proper century and self—for by that sign you know that your voyage is over for the present, and that the way to Coruisk is across the steep hill in front.

The boat was moored to a rude pier of stones, very similar to the one from which we started a couple of hours before, the guns were taken out, so

was also the basket of provisions, and then the party, in long-drawn straggling procession, began to ascend the hill. The ascent is steep and laborious. At times you wade through heather as high as your knee; at other times you find yourself in a bog, and must jump perforce from solid turf to turf. Progress is necessarily slow; and the sun coming out strongly makes the brows ache with intolerable heat. The hill-top is reached at last, and you behold a magnificent sight. Beneath, a blue Loch flows in, on the margin of which stands the solitary farm-house of Camasunary. Out on the smooth sea sleep the islands of Rum and Canna —Rum towered and mountainous, Canna flat and fertile. On the opposite side of the Loch, and beyond the solitary farm-house, a great hill breaks down into ocean with shelf and precipice. On the right Blaavin towers up into the mists of the morning, and at his base opens the desolate Glen Sligachan, to which Glencoe is Arcady. On the left, the eye travels along the whole south-west side of the island to the Sound of Sleat, to the hills of Knoydart, to the long point of Ardnamurchan, dim on the horizon. In the presence of

all this we sink down in heather or on boulder, and wipe our heated foreheads; in the presence of all this M'Ian hands round the flask, which is received with the liveliest gratitude. In a quarter of an hour we begin the descent, and in another quarter of an hour we are in the valley, and approaching the solitary farm-house. While about three hundred yards from the door a man issued therefrom and came towards us. It would have been difficult to divine from dress and appearance what order of man this was. He was evidently not a farmer, he was as evidently not a sportsman. His countenance was grave, his eye was bright, but you could make little out of either; about him there was altogether a listless and a weary look. He seemed to me to have held too constant communion with the ridges of Blaavin and the desolations of Glen Sligachan. He was not a native of these parts, for he spoke with an English accent. He addressed us frankly, discussed the weather, told us the family was from home, and would be absent for some weeks yet; that he had seen us coming down the hill, and that, weary of rocks and sheep and sea-birds, he had come out to meet us. He then

expressed a wish that we would oblige him with tobacco, that is, if we were in a position to spare any: stating that tobacco he generally procured from Broadford in rolls of a pound weight at a time; that he had finished his last roll some ten days ago, and that till this period, from some unaccountable accident, the roll, which was more than a week due, had never arrived. He feared it had got lost on the way—he feared that the bearer had been tempted to smoke a pipe of it, and had been so charmed with its exquisite flavour that he had been unable to stir from the spot until he had smoked the entire roll out. He rather thought the bearer would be about the end of the roll now, and that, conscious of his atrocious conduct, he would never appear before him, but would fly the country—go to America, or the Long Island, or some other place where he could hold his guilt a secret. He had found the paper in which the last roll had been wrapt, had smoked *that*, and by a strong effort of imagination had contrived to extract from it considerable enjoyment. And so we made a contribution of bird's-eye to the tobacco-less man, for which he returned us

politest thanks, and then strolled carelessly toward Glen Sligachan—probably to look out for the messenger who had been so long on the way.

"Who is our friend?" I asked of my companion. "He seems to talk in a rambling and fanciful manner."

"I have never seen him before," said M'Ian; "but I suspect he is one of those poor fellows who, from extravagance, or devotion to opium or strong waters, have made a mull of life, and who are sent here to end it in a quiet way. We have lots of them everywhere."

"But," said I, "this seems the very worst place you could send such a man to—it's like sending a man into a wilderness with his remorse. It is only in the world, amid its noise, its ambitions, its responsibilities, that men pick themselves up. Sea-birds, and misty mountains, and rain, and silence are the worst companions for such a man."

"But then, you observe, sea-birds, and misty mountains, and rain, and silence hold their tongues, and take no notice of peccadilloes. Whatever may be their faults, they are not scandal-mongers. The doings in Skye do not cause blushes in London.

The man dies here as silently as a crow; it is only a black-bordered letter, addressed in a strange hand, that tells the news; and the black-bordered epistle can be thrown into the fire—if the poor mother does not clutch at it and put it away—and no one be a bit the wiser. It is sometimes to the advantage of his friends that a man should go into the other world by the loneliest and most sequestered path."

So talking, we passed the farm-house, which, with the exception of a red-headed damsel, who thrust her head out of a barn to stare, seemed utterly deserted, and bent our steps towards the shore of the Loch. Rough grass bordered a crescent of yellow sand, and on the rough grass a boat lay on its side, its pitchy seams blistering in the early sunshine. Of this boat we immediately took possession, dragged it down to the sea margin, got in our guns and provisions, tumbled in stones for ballast, procured oars, and pushed of. We had to round the great hill which, from the other side of the valley, we had seen breaking down into the sea; and as we sailed and looked up, sheep

were feeding on the green shelves, and every now and again a white smoke of sea-birds burst out clangorously from the black precipices. Slowly rounding the rocky buttress, which on stormy days the Atlantic fillips with its spray, another headland, darker still and drearier, drew slowly out to sea, and in a quarter of an hour we had passed from the main ocean into Loch Scavaig, and every pull of the oars revealed another ridge of the Cuchullins. Between these mountain ramparts we sailed, silent as a boatful of souls being conveyed to some Norse hades. The Cuchullins were entirely visible now; and the sight midway up Loch Scavaig is more impressive even than when you stand on the ruined shore of Loch Coruisk itself—for the reason, perhaps, that, sailing midway, the mountain forms have a startling unexpectedness, while by the time you have pulled the whole way up, you have had time to master them to some extent, and familiarity has begun to dull the impression. In half an hour or so we disembarked on a rude platform of rock, and stepped out on the very spot on which, according to Sir Walter, the Bruce landed :

"Where a wild stream with headlong shock
Comes brawling down a bed of rock
To mingle with the main."

Picking your steps carefully over huge boulder and slippery stone, you come upon the most savage scene of desolation in Britain. Conceive a large lake filled with dark green water, girt with torn and shattered precipices; the bases of which are strewn with ruin since an earthquake passed that way, and whose summits jag the sky with grisly splinter and peak. There is no motion here save the white vapour steaming from the abyss. The utter silence weighs like a burden upon you: you feel an intruder in the place. The hills seem to possess some secret; to brood over some unutterable idea which you can never know. You cannot feel comfortable at Loch Coruisk, and the discomfort arises in a great degree from the feeling that you are outside of everything—that the thunder-splitten peaks have a life with which you cannot intermeddle. The dumb monsters sadden and perplex. Standing there, you are impressed with the idea that the mountains are silent because they are listening so intently. And the mountains *are* listening, else why do they echo

our voices in such a wonderful way? Shout here like an Achilles in the trenches. Listen! The hill opposite takes up your words, and repeats them one after another, and curiously tries them over with the gravity of a raven. Immediately after, you hear a multitude of skyey voices.

"Methinks that there are spirits among the peaks."

How strangely the clear strong tones are repeated by these granite precipices! Who could conceive that Horror had so sweet a voice! Fainter and more musical they grow; fainter, sweeter, and more remote, until at last they come on your ear as if from the blank of the sky itself. M'Ian fired his gun, and it reverberated into a whole battle of Waterloo. We kept the hills busy with shouts and the firing of guns, and then M'Ian led us to a convenient place for lunching. As we trudge along something lifts itself off a rock—'tis an eagle. See how grandly the noble creature soars away. What sweep of wings! What a lord of the air! And if you cast up your eyes you will see his brother hanging like a speck beneath the sun. Under M'Ian's guidance, we

reached the lunching-place, unpacked our basket, devoured our bread and cold mutton, drank our bottled beer, and then lighted our pipes and smoked—in the strangest presence. Thereafter we bundled up our things, shouldered our guns, and marched in the track of ancient Earthquake towards our boat. Embarked once again, and sailing between the rocky portals of Loch Scavaig, I said, "I would not spend a day in that solitude for the world. I should go mad before evening."

"Nonsense," said M'Ian. "Sportsmen erect tents at Coruisk, and stay there by the week—capital trout, too, are to be had in the Loch. The photographer, with his camera and chemicals, is almost always here, and the hills sit steadily for their portraits. It 's as well you have seen Coruisk before its glory has departed. Your friend, the Landlord, talks of mooring a floating hotel at the head of Loch Scavaig full of sleeping apartments, the best of meats and drinks, and a brass band to perform the newest operatic tunes on the summer evenings. At the clangour of the brass band the last eagle will take his flight for Harris."

"The Tourist comes, and poetry flies before him

as the red man flies before the white. His Tweeds will make the secret top of Sinai commonplace some day."

In due time we reached Camasunary, and drew the boat up on the rough grass beyond the yellow sand. The house looked deserted as we passed. Our friend of the morning we saw seated on a rock, smoking, and gazing up Glen Sligachan, still looking out for the appearance of his messenger from Broadford. At our shout he turned his head and waved his hand. We then climbed the hill and descended on Kilmaree. It was evening now, and as we pulled homewards across the rosy frith, I sat in the bow and watched the monstrous bulk of Blaavin, and the wild fringe of the Cuchullins bronzed by sunset. M'Ian steered, and the rowers, as they bent to their work, sang melancholy Gaelic songs. It was eleven at night by the time we got across, and the hills we had left were yet cutting, with dull purple, a pale yellow sky; for in summer in these northern latitudes there is no proper night, only a mysterious twilight of an hour and a sparkle of short-lived stars.

Broadford Fair is a great event in the island.

The little town lies on the margin of a curving bay, and under the shadow of a somewhat celebrated hill. On the crest of the hill is a cairn of stones, the burying-place of a Scandinavian woman, tradition informs me, whose wish it was to be laid high up there, that she might sleep right in the pathway of the Norway wind. In a green glen at its base stands the house of Corachatachin, breathing reminiscences of Johnson and Boswell. Broadford is a post town, containing a lime kiln, an inn, and perhaps three dozen houses in all. It is a place of great importance. If Portree is the London of Skye, Broadford is its Manchester. The markets, held four times a year, take place on a patch of moorland, about a mile from the village. Not only are cattle sold, and cash exchanged for the same, but there the Skye farmer meets his relations, from the brother of his blood to his cousin forty times removed. To these meetings he is drawn, not only by his love of coin, but by his love of kindred, and—the *Broadford Mail* and the *Portree Advertiser* lying yet in the womb of time—by his love of gossip also. The market is the Skye-man's exchange, his family gathering, and his newspaper.

From the deep sea of his solitude he comes up to breathe there, and, refreshed, sinks again. This fair at Broadford I resolved to see. The day before the market the younger M'Ian had driven some forty stirks from the hill, and these, under the charge of John Kelly and his dog, started early in the afternoon that they might be present at the rendezvous about eight o'clock on the following morning, at which hour business generally began. I saw the picturesque troop go past — wildly-beautiful brutes of all colours,—black, red, cream-coloured, dun and tan; all of a height, too, and so finely bred that, but for difference of colour, you could hardly distinguish the one from the other. What a lowing they made! how they tossed their slavering muzzles! how the breaths of each individual brute rose in a separate wreath! how John Kelly shouted and objurgated, and how his dog scoured about! At last the bellowings of the animals — the horde chanting after that fashion their obscure "*Lochaber no more*" — grew fainter and fainter up the glen, and finally on everything the wonted silence settled down. Next morning before sunrise M'Ian and I followed

in a dog-cart. We went along the glen down which Fellowes and I had come; and in the meadows over which, on that occasion, we observed a troop of horses galloping through the mist of evening, I noticed, in the beamless light that preceded sunrise, hay coops by the river side, and an empty cart standing with its scarlet poles in the air. In a field nearer, a couple of male black-cocks with a loud *whirr-rr* were knocking their pugnacious heads together. Suddenly, above the hill in front the sun showed his radiant face, the chill atmosphere was pierced and brightened by his fires, the dewy birch-trees twinkled, and there were golden flickerings on the pools of the mountain stream along whose margin our road ascended. We passed the lake near which the peat-girls had laughed at us; I took note of the very spot on which we had given Bare-legs a shilling, and related the whole story of our evening walk to my companion as we tooled along.

A mile or two after we had passed the little fishing village with which I had formerly made acquaintance, we entered on a very dismal district of country. It was precisely to the eye what the

croak of the raven is to the ear. It was an utter desolation in which nature seemed deteriorated, and at her worst. Winter could not possibly sadden the region; no spring could quicken it into flowers. The hills wore but for ornament the white streak of the torrent; the rocky soil clothed itself in heather to which the purple never came. Even man, the miracle-worker, who transforms everything he touches, who has rescued a fertile Holland from the waves, who has reared a marble Venice out of salt lagoon and marsh, was defeated there. Labour was resultless—it went no further than itself—it was like a song without an echo. A turf-hut with smoke issuing from the roof, and a patch of green round about, which reminded you of the smile of an ailing child, and which would probably ripen, so far as it was capable of ripening, by November, was all that man could wrest from nature. Gradually, however, as we proceeded, the aspect of the country changed, it began to exhibit traces of cultivation; and before long, the red hill with the Norwegian woman's cairn atop, rose before us, suggesting Broadford, and the close of the journey. In a

little while the road was filled with cattle, driven forward with oath and shout. Every now and then a dog-cart came skirring along, and infinite was the confusion, and dire the clangour of tongues, when it plunged into a herd of sheep or skittish "three-year-olds." At the entrance to the fair, the horses were taken out of the vehicles, and left, with a leathern thong fastened round their fore-legs, to limp about in search of breakfast. On either side of the road stood hordes of cattle, the wildest-looking creatures, with fells of hair hanging over their eyes, and tossing horns of preposterous dimensions. On knolls, a little apart, women with white caps and wrapped in scarlet tartan plaids, sat beside a staked cow or pony, or perhaps a dozen sheep, patiently waiting the advances of customers. Troops of horses neighed from stakes. Sheep were there, too, in restless throngs and masses, continually changing their shapes, scattering hither and thither like quicksilver, insane dogs and men flying along their edges. What a hubbub of sound! what lowing and neighing! what bleating and barking! Down in the hollow ground tents had been knocked up since dawn; there potatoes

were being cooked for drovers who had been travelling all night; there also liquor could be had. To these places, I observed, contracting parties invariably repaired to solemnise a bargain. At last we reached the centre of the fair, and there stood John Kelly and his animals, a number of drovers moving around them and examining their points. By these men my friend was immediately surrounded, and much chaffering and bargain-making ensued; visits to one of the aforesaid tents being made at intervals. It was a strange sight that rude primeval traffic. John Kelly kept a sharp eye on his beasts. Lachlan Roy passed by, and low was his salute, and broad the smile on his good-natured countenance. I wandered about aimlessly for a time, and began to weary of the noise and tumult. M'Ian had told me that he would not be able to return before noonday at earliest, and that all the while he would be engaged in bargain-making on his own account, or on the account of others, and that during those hours I must amuse myself as best I could. As the novelty of the scene wore off, I began to fear that amusement would not be possible. Suddenly

lifting my eyes out of the noise and confusion, there were the solitary mountain tops, and the clear mirror of Broadford Bay, the opposite coast sleeping green in it with all its woods; and lo! the steamer from the south sliding in with her red funnel, and breaking the reflection with a track of foam, and disturbing the far-off morning silence with the thunders of her paddles. That sight solved my difficulty for me in a moment. I thought of Dr Johnson and Boswell. "I shall go," I said, "and look at the ruins of the House of Corachatachin, that lies in the green glen beneath the red hill, on the top of which the Norse woman is buried;" and so saying I went.

To me, I confess, of all Hebridean associations, Dr Johnson's visit is the pleasantest. How the doctor ever got there is a matter for perpetual wonder. He liked books, good cheer, club-life, the roar of Fleet Street, good talk, witty companions. One cannot imagine what attractions the rainy and surge-beaten islands possessed for the author of the "Vanity of Human Wishes." Wordsworth had not yet made fashionable a love for mountain and lake, and the shapes of changing cloud. Scott

had not yet thrown the glamour of romance over the northern land, from the Sark to the Fitful Head. For fine scenery Johnson did not care one rush. When Boswell in the fulness of his delight pointed out "an immense mountain," the doctor sincerely sneered, "an immense protuberance." He only cared for mountains in books, and even in books he did not care for them much. The rain-cloud, which would put Mr Ruskin into ecstasies, could only suggest to the moralist the urgent necessity of an umbrella or a coach. Johnson loved his ease; and a visit to the Western island, was in his day a serious matter — about as serious as a visit to Kamtschatka would be in ours. In his wanderings he was exposed to rain and wind, indifferent cookery, tempestuous seas, and the conversation of persons who were neither witty nor learned—who were neither polished like Beauclerk, nor amusing like Goldsmith—and who laughed at epigram as Leviathan laughs at the shaking of the spear. I protest, when I think of the burly doctor travelling in these regions, voluntarily resigning for a while all London delights, I admire him as a very hero. Boswell commemor-

ates certain outbreaks of petulance and spleen; but, on the whole, the great man seems to have been pleased with his adventure. Johnson found in his wanderings beautiful and high-bred women, well-mannered and cultivated men—and it is more than probable that, if he were returning to the islands to-day, he would not find those admirable human qualities in greater abundance. What puzzles me most is the courage with which the philosopher encountered the sea. I have, in a considerable steamer more than once, shivered at the heavy surge breaking on Ardnamurchan; and yet the doctor passed the place in an open boat on his way to Mull, "lying down below in philosophical tranquillity, with a greyhound at his back to keep him warm," while poor Bozzy remained in the rain above, clinging for dear life to a rope which a sailor gave him to hold, quieting his insurgent stomach as best he could with pious considerations, and sadly disturbed when a bigger wave than usual came shouldering onward, making the boat reel, with the objections which had been taken to a particular providence — objections which Dr Hawkesworth had lately revived in his preface to

"Voyages to the South Seas." Boswell's journal of the tour is delicious reading; full of amusing egotism; unconsciously comic when he speaks for himself, and at the same time valuable, memorable, wonderfully vivid and dramatic in presentment when the "Majestic Teacher of Moral and Religious Wisdom" appears. What a singular capacity the man had to exhibit his hero as he lived, and at the same time to write himself complacently down an ass! It needed a certain versatility to accomplish the feat, one would think. In both ways the most eminent success attends him. And yet the absurdity of Boswell has all the effect of the nicest art. Johnson floats, a vast galleon, in the sea of Boswell's vanity; and in contrast with the levity of the element in which it lives, its bulk and height appear all the more impressive. In Skye one is every now and again coming on the tract of the distinguished travellers. They had been at Broadford—and that morning I resolved I should go to Broadford also.

Picking my steps carefully through the fair—avoiding a flock of sheep on the one side, and a

column of big-horned black cattle on the other, with some difficulty getting out of the way of an infuriated bull that came charging up the road, scattering everything right and left, a dozen blown drovers panting at its heels—I soon got quit of the turmoil, and in half an hour passed the lime-kiln, the dozen houses, the ten shops, the inn, and the church, which constitute Broadford, and was pacing along the green glen which ran in the direction of the red hills. At last I came to a confused pile of stones, near which grew a solitary tree whose back the burden of the blast had bent, and which, although not a breath of wind was stirring, could no more regain an upright position than can a round-shouldered labourer on a holiday. That confused pile of stones was all that remained of the old house of Corachatachin. I wandered around it more reverently than if it had been the cairn of a chief. It is haunted by no ghost. So far as my knowledge extends, no combat ever took place on the spot. But there Boswell, after Dr Johnson had retired to rest, in company with some young Highland bloods—ah, me! their very grandchildren must be dead or gray by this!—brewed and

quaffed five gigantic bowls of punch, with what wild talk we can fancy; and the friend of the "Majestic Teacher of Moral and Religious Wisdom" went to bed at five in the morning, and awoke with the headache of the reprobate. At noon the doctor burst in with the exclamation, "What, drunk yet?" "His tone of voice was not that of severe upbraiding," writes the penitent Bozzy, "so I was relieved a little." Did they fancy, these young men, as they sat that night and drank, that a hundred years after people would write of their doings?—that the odour of their punch-bowls would outlive themselves? No man knows what part of his life will be remembered, what forgotten. A single tear, hurriedly brushed away mayhap, is the best thing we know of Xerxes. Picking one's steps around the ruin, one thought curiously of the flushed faces which death has cooled for so long.

When I got back to the fair about noon, it was evident that a considerable stroke of business had been done. Hordes of bellowing cattle were being driven towards Broadford, and drovers were rushing about in a wonderful manner, armed with tar-pot and stick, and smearing their peculiar mark

on the shaggy hides of their purchases. Rough-looking customers enough these fellows, yet they want not means. Some of them came here this morning with £500 in their pocket-books, and have spent every paper of it, and this day three months they will return with as large a sum. As I advanced, the booths ranged along the side of the road—empty when I passed them several hours before—were plentifully furnished with confections, ribbons, and cheap jewellery, and around these fair-headed and scarlet-plaided girls swarmed thickly as bees round summer flowers.

The fair was running its full career of bargain-making, and consequent dram-drinking, rude flirtation, and meeting of friend with friend; when up the middle of the road, hustling the passengers, terrifying the cattle, came three misguided young gentlemen—medical students, I opined, engaged in botanical researches in these regions. But too plainly they had been dwellers in tents. One of them, gifted with a comic genius—his companions were desperately solemn—at one point of the road threw back the collar of his coat, after the fashion of Sambo when he brings down the applauses of the

threepenny gallery, and executed a shuffle in front of a bewildered cow. Crummie backed and shied, bent on retreat. He, agile as a cork, bobbed up and down in her front, turn whither she would, with shouts and hideous grimaces, his companions standing by the while like mutes at a funeral. The feat accomplished, the trio staggered on, amid the scornful laughter and derision of the Gael. In a little while I encountered M'Ian, who had finished his business and was anxious to be gone. "We must harness the horse ourselves," he said, "for that rascal, John Kelly, has gone off somewhere. He has been in and out of tents ever since the cattle were sold, and I trust he won't come to grief. He has a standing quarrel with the Kyle men, and may get a broken head." Elbowing our way through the crowd, we reached the dog-cart, got the horse harnessed, and were just about to start, when Lachlan Roy, his bonnet off, his countenance inflamed, came flying up. "Maister Alic, Maister Alic, is my face red yet?" cried he, as he laid his hand on the vehicle. "Red enough, Lachlan; you had better come with us, you may lose your money if you don't." "Aw, Maister Alic dear, don't

say my face is red—it's no red, Maister Alic—it's no *vera* red," pled the poor fellow. "Will you come with us, or will you not?" said M'Ian, as he gathered up the reins in his hand and seized the whip. At this moment three or four drovers issued from a tent in the neighbourhood, and Lachlan heard his name shouted. "I maun go back for my bonnet. It wouldna do to ride with gentlemen without a bonnet;" and he withdrew his hand. The drovers shouted again, and that second shout drew Lachlan towards it as the flame draws the moth. "His face will be red enough before evening," said M'Ian, as we drove away.

After we had driven about a quarter of an hour, and got entirely free of the fair, M'Ian, shading his eyes from the sun with a curved palm, suddenly exclaimed, "There's a red dog sitting by the road-side a little forward. It looks like John Kelly's." When we got up, the dog wagged its tail and whined, but retained its recumbent position. "Come out," said M'Ian. "The dog is acting the part of a sentinel, and I daresay we shall find its master about." We got out accordingly, and soon found John stretched on the heather, snoring

stertorously, his neck-tie unloosened, his bonnet gone, the sun shining full on the rocky countenance of him. "He's as drunk as the Baltic," said M'Ian; "but we must get him out of this. Get up, John." But John made no response. We pinched, pulled, and thumped, but John was immovable. I proposed that some water should be poured on his face, and did procure some from a wet ditch near, with which his countenance was splashed copiously —not to its special adornment. The muddy water only produced a grunt of dissatisfaction. "We must take him on his fighting side," said M'Ian, and then he knelt down and shouted in John's ear, "Here's a man from Kyle says he's a better man than you." John grunted inarticulate defiance. "He says he'll fight you any day you like." "Tell him to strike me, then," said John, struggling with his stupor. "He says he'll kick you." Under the insult John visibly writhed. "Kick him," whispered M'Ian, "as hard as you can. It's our only chance." I kicked, and John was erect as a dart, striking blindly out, and when he became aware against whom he was making such hostile demonstrations his hands dropped, and he stood as if he

had seen a ghost. "Catch him," said M'Ian, "his rage has sobered him, he'll be drunk next moment; get him into the dog-cart at once." So the lucid moment was taken advantage of, he was hoisted into the back seat of the vehicle, his bonnet was procured—he had fallen asleep upon it—and placed on the wild head of him; we took our places, and away we started, with the red dog trotting behind. John rolled off once or twice, but there was no great harm done, and we easily got him in again. As we drove down the glen toward the house we set him down, and advised him to dip his wildly-tangled head in the stream before he went home.

During the last few weeks I have had opportunity of witnessing something of life as it passes in the Skye wildernesses, and have been struck with its self-containedness, not less than with its remoteness. A Skye family has everything within itself. The bare mountains yield mutton, which possesses a flavour and delicacy unknown in the south. The copses swarm with rabbits; and if a net is set over-night at the Black Island, there is abundance of fish to breakfast. The farmer grows his own corn, barley, and potatoes, digs his own peats,

makes his own candles; he tans leather, spins cloth shaggy as a terrier's pile, and a hunchbacked artist in the place transforms the raw materials into boots or shepherd garments. Twice every year a huge hamper arrives from Glasgow, stuffed with all the little luxuries of housekeeping—tea, sugar, coffee, and the like. At more frequent intervals comes a ten-gallon cask from Greenock, whose contents can cunningly draw the icy fangs of a north-easter, or take the chill out of the clammy mists.

"What want they that a king should have?"

And once a week the *Inverness Courier*, like a window suddenly opened on the roaring sea, brings a murmur of the outer world, its politics, its business, its crimes, its literature, its whole multitudinous and unsleeping life, making the stillness yet more still. To the Islesman the dial face of the year is not artificially divided, as in cities, by parliamentary session and recess, college terms, vacations short and long, by the rising and sitting of courts of justice; nor yet, as in more fortunate soils, by imperceptible gradations of coloured light —the green flowery year deepening into the sunset

of the October hollyhock; the slow reddening of burdened orchards; the slow yellowing of wheaten plains. Not by any of these, but by the higher and more affecting element of animal life, with its passions and instincts, its gladness and suffering; existence like our own, although in a lower key, and untouched by solemn issues; the same music and wail, although struck on rude and uncertain chords. To the Islesman the year rises into interest when the hills, yet wet with melted snows, are pathetic with newly-yeaned lambs, and it completes itself through the successive steps of weaning, fleecing, sorting, fattening, sale, final departure, and cash in pocket. The shepherd life is more interesting than the agricultural, inasmuch as it deals with a higher order of being; for I suppose—apart from considerations of profit—a couchant ewe, with her young one at her side, or a ram, "with wreathed horns superb," cropping the herbage, is a more pleasing object to the æsthetic sense than a field of mangel-wurzel, flourishing ever so gloriously. The shepherd inhabits a mountain country, lives more completely in the open air, and is acquainted with all the phenomena of storm

and calm, the thunder-smoke coiling in the wind, the hawk hanging stationary in the breathless blue. He knows the faces of the hills, recognises the voices of the torrents as if they were children of his own, can unknit their intricate melody as he lies with his dog beside him on the warm slope at noon, separating tone from tone, and giving this to rude crag, that to pebbly bottom. From long intercourse, every member of his flock wears to his eye its special individuality, and he recognises the countenance of a "wether" as he would the countenance of a human acquaintance. Sheep-farming is a picturesque occupation: and I think a multitude of sheep descending a hill-side, now outspreading in bleating leisure, now huddling together in the haste of fear—the dogs, urged more by sagacity than by the shepherd's voice, flying along the edges, turning, guiding, changing the shape of the mass—one of the prettiest sights in the world.

The milking of the cows is worth going a considerable distance to see. The cows browse about on the hills all day, and at sunset they are driven into a sort of green oasis, amid the surround-

ing birch-wood. The rampart of rock above is dressed in evening colours, the grass is golden green; everything—animals, herds, and milkmaids are throwing long shadows. All about, the cows stand lowing in picturesque groups. The milkmaid approaches one, caresses it for a moment, draws in her stool, and in an instant the rich milk is hissing in the pail. All at once there arises a tremendous noise, and pushing through the clumps of birch-wood down towards a shallow rivulet which skirts the oasis, breaks a troop of wild-looking calves, attended by a troop of wilder-looking urchins armed with sticks and the branches of trees. The cows low more than ever, and turn their wistful eyes; the bellowing calves are halted on the further side of the rivulet, and the urchins stand in the water to keep them back. An ardent calf, however, breaks through the cordon of urchins, tumbles one into the streamlet, climbs the bank amid much Gaelic exclamation, and ambles awkwardly toward his dam. Reaching her, he makes a wild push at the swollen udder, drinks, his tail shaking with delight; while she, turning her head round, licks his shaggy hide with fond maternal tongue. In

about five minutes he is forced to desist, and with a branch-bearing urchin on each side of him, is marched across the rivulet again. One by one the calves are allowed to cross, each makes the same wild push at the udder, each drinks, the tail ecstatically quivering; and on each the dam fixes her great patient eyes, and turning licks the hide whether it be red, black, brindled, dun, or cream-coloured. When the calves have been across the rivulet and back again, and the cows are being driven away to their accustomed pasturage, a milk-maid approaches with her pail, and holding it up, gives you to drink, as long ago Rebecca gave to drink the servant of Abraham. By this time the grass is no longer golden green; the red light has gone off the rocky ramparts, and the summer twilight is growing in the hollows, and in amongst the clumps of birch-wood. Afar you hear the noise of retiring calves and urchins. The milk-maids start off in long procession with their pails and stools. A rabbit starts out from a bush at your feet, and scurries away down the dim field. And when, following, you descend the hill-side toward the bridge you see the solemn purple of the Cuchullins cutting the yellow

pallor of evening sky—perhaps with a feeling of deeper satisfaction you notice that a light is burning in the porch of Mr M'Ian's house. "The fold," as the milking of the cows is called, is pretty enough; but the most affecting incident of shepherd life is the weaning of the lambs—affecting, because it reveals passions in the fleecy flocks, the manifestation of which we are accustomed to consider ornamental in ourselves. From all the hills men and dogs drive the flocks down into a fold, or *fank*, as it is called here, consisting of several chambers or compartments. Into these compartments the sheep are huddled, and then the separation takes place. The ewes are returned to the mountains, the lambs are driven away to some spot where the pasture is rich, and where they are watched day and night. Midnight comes with dews and stars; the lambs are peacefully couched. Suddenly they are restless, ill at ease, goaded by some sore unknown want, and seem disposed to scatter wildly in every direction; but the shepherds are wary, the dogs swift and sure, and after a little while the perturbation is allayed, and they are quiet again. Walk up now to the

fank. The full moon is riding between the hills, filling the glens with lustres and floating mysterious glooms. Listen! you hear it on every side of you, till it dies away in the silence of distance—the fleecy Rachel weeping for her children! The turf walls of the fank are in shadow, but something seems to be moving there. As you approach, it disappears with a quick short bleat, and a hurry of tiny hooves. Wonderful mystery of instinct! Affection all the more affecting that it is so wrapt in darkness, hardly knowing its own meaning. For nights and nights the creatures will be found haunting about those turfen walls seeking the young that have been taken away.

But my chief delight here is my friend, Mr M'Ian. I know that I described him when I first saw him in his own house; but knowing him better now, as a matter of course I can describe him better. He would strike one with a sense of strangeness in a city, and among men of the present generation; but here he creates no surprise—he is a natural product of the region, like the red heather, or the bed of the dried torrent. He is master of legendary lore. He knows the history of every

considerable family in the island; he circulates like sap through every genealogical tree; he is an enthusiast in Gaelic poetry, and is fond of reciting compositions of native bards, his eyes lighted up, and his tongue moving glibly over the rugged clots of consonants. He has a servant cunning upon the pipes; and, dwelling there this summer, I heard Ronald wandering near the house, solacing himself with their music: now a plaintive love-song, now a coronach for chieftain borne to his grave, now a battle march, the notes of which, melancholy and monotonous at first, would soar into a higher strain, and then hurry and madden as if beating time to the footsteps of the charging clan. I am the fool of association; and the tree under which a king has rested, the stone on which a banner was planted on the morning of some victorious or disastrous day, the house in which some great man first saw the light, are to me the sacredest things. This slight, gray, keen-eyed man —the scabbard sorely frayed now, the blade sharp and bright as ever—gives me a thrill like an old coin with its half-obliterated effigy, a Druid stone on a moor, a stain of blood on the floor of a palace.

He stands before me a living figure, and history groups itself behind by way of background. He sits at the same board with me, and yet he lifted Moore at Corunna, and saw the gallant dying eyes flash up with their last pleasure when the Highlanders charged past. He lay down to sleep in the light of Wellington's watch-fires in the gorges of the Pyrenees; around him roared the death-thunders of Waterloo. There is a certain awfulness about very old men; they are amongst us, but not of us. They crop out of the living soil and herbage of to-day, like rocky strata bearing marks of the glacier or the wave. Their roots strike deeper than ours, and they draw sustenance from an earlier layer of soil. They are lonely amongst the young; they cannot form new friendships, and are willing to be gone. They feel the "sublime attractions of the grave;" for the soil of churchyards once flashed kind eyes on them, heard with them the chimes at midnight, sang and clashed the brimming goblet with them; and the present Tom and Harry are as nothing to the Tom and Harry that swaggered about and toasted the reigning belles seventy years ago. We are accus-

tomed to lament the shortness of life; but it is wonderful how long it is notwithstanding. Often a single life, like a summer twilight, connects two historic days. Count back four lives, and King Charles is kneeling on the scaffold at Whitehall. To hear M'Ian speak, one could not help thinking in this way. In a short run across the mainland with him this summer, we reached Culloden Moor. The old gentleman with a mournful air—for he is a great Jacobite, and wears the Prince's hair in a ring—pointed out the burial-grounds of the clans. Struck with his manner, I inquired how he came to know their red resting-places. As if hurt, he drew himself up, laid his hand on my shoulder, saying, "Those who put them in told me." Heavens, how a century and odd years collapsed, and the bloody field—the battle-smoke not yet cleared away, and where Cumberland's artillery told the clansmen sleeping in thickest swathes—unrolled itself from the horizon down to my very feet! For a whole evening he will sit and speak of his London life; and I cannot help contrasting the young officer, who trod Bond Street with powder in his hair at the end of last century,

with the old man living in the shadow of Blaavin now.

Dwellers in cities have occasionally seen a house that has the reputation of being haunted, and heard a ghost story told. City people laugh when these stories are told, even although the blood should run chill the while. But in Skye one is steeped in a ghostly atmosphere; men walk about here gifted with the second sight. There has been something weird and uncanny about the island for some centuries. Douglas, on the morning of Otterbourne, according to the ballad, was shaken with superstitious fears:—

> "But I hae dream'd a dreary dream—
> Beyond the Isle of Skye,
> I saw a dead man win a fight,
> And I think that man was I."

Then the whole country is full of stories of the Norwegian times and earlier—stories it might be worth Dr Dasent's while to take note of, should he ever visit the Hebrides. Skye, more particularly, is haunted of legends. It is as full of noises as Prospero's Island. One such legend, concerning Ossian and his poems, struck me a good deal. Near Mr M'Ian's place is a ruined castle, a mere

hollow shell of a building, Dunscaich by name, built in Fingalian days by the chieftain Cuchullin, and so called by him in honour of his wife. The ruin stands on a rocky headland bearded by gray-green lichens. It is quite desolate, and but seldom visited. The only sounds heard there are the whistle of the salt breeze, the bleat of a strayed sheep, the cry of wheeling sea-birds. M'Ian and myself sat one summer day on the ruined stair. Loch Eishart lay calm and bright beneath, the blue expanse broken only by a creeping sail. Across the Loch rose the great red hill, in the shadow of which Boswell got drunk, on the top of which is perched the Scandinavian woman's cairn; and out of the bare heaven, down on the crests of the Cuchullins, flowed a great white vapour which gathered in the sunlight in mighty fleece on fleece. The old gentleman was the narrator, and the legend goes as follows:—The castle was built by Cuchullin and his Fingalians in a single night. The chieftain had many retainers, was a great hunter, and terrible in war. With his own arm he broke battalions; and every night at feast the minstrel Ossian sang his exploits. Ossian, on

one occasion, wandering among the hills, was attracted by strains of music which seemed to issue from a round green knoll on which the sun shone pleasantly. He sat down to listen, and was lulled asleep by the melody. He had no sooner fallen asleep than the knoll opened, and he beheld the under-world of the fairies. That afternoon and night he spent in revelry, and in the morning he was allowed to return. Again the music sounded, again the senses of the minstrel were steeped in forgetfulness; and on the sunny knoll he awoke, a gray-haired man, for into one short afternoon and evening had been crowded a hundred of our human years. In his absence the world had been entirely changed, the Fingalians were extinct, and the dwarfish race whom we now call men were possessors of the country. Longing for companionship, and weary of singing his songs to the earless rocks and sea waves, Ossian married the daughter of a shepherd, and in process of time a little girl was born to him. Years passed on, his wife died, and his daughter, woman grown now, married a pious man—for the people were Christianised by this time—called, from his love of

psalmody, Peter of the Psalms. Ossian, blind with age, and bearded like the cliff yonder, went to reside with his daughter and her husband. Peter was engaged all day in hunting, and when he came home at evening and the lamp was lighted, Ossian, sitting in a warm corner, was wont to recite the wonderful songs of his youth, and to celebrate the mighty battles and hunting feats of the big-boned Fingalians—and in these songs Cuchullin stood with his terrible spear upraised, and his beautiful wife sat amid her maids plying the distaff. To these songs Peter of the Psalms gave attentive ear, and, being something of a penman, carefully inscribed them in a book. One day Peter had been more than usually successful in the chase, and brought home on his shoulders the carcass of a huge stag. Of this stag a leg was dressed for supper, and when it was picked bare, Peter triumphantly inquired of Ossian, "In the Fingalian days you sing about, killed you ever a stag so large as this one?" Ossian balanced the bone in his hand, then sniffing intense disdain, replied, "This bone, big as you think it, could be dropped into the hollow of a Fingalian blackbird's leg." Peter of

the Psalms, enraged at what he considered an unconscionable *crammer* on the part of his father-in-law, started up, swearing that he would not peril his soul by preserving any more of his lying songs, and flung the volume in the fire: but his wife darted forward and snatched it up, half-charred, from the embers. At this conduct on the part of Peter, Ossian groaned in spirit and wished to die, that he might be saved from the envies and stupidities of the little people whose minds were as stunted as their bodies. When he went to bed he implored his ancient gods—for he was a sad heathen, and considered psalm-singing no better than the howling of dogs—to resuscitate, if but for one hour, the hounds, the stags, and the blackbirds of his youth, that he might confound and astonish the unbelieving Peter. His prayers done, he fell on slumber, and just before dawn a weight upon his breast awoke him. He put forth his hands and stroked a shaggy hide. Ossian's prayers were answered, for there, upon his breast, in the dark of the morning, was couched his favourite hound. He spoke to it, called it by name, and the faithful creature whimpered and licked his hands and face.

Swiftly he got up and called his little grandson, and they went out with the hound. When they came to the top of a little eminence, Ossian said to the child, "Put your fingers in your ears, little one, else I will make you deaf for life." The boy put his fingers in his ears, and then Ossian whistled so loud that the whole sky rang as if it had been the roof of a cave He then asked the child if he saw anything. "Oh, such large deer!" said the child. "But a small herd by the trampling of it," said Ossian; "we will let that herd pass." Presently the child called out, "Oh, *such* large deer!" Ossian bent his ear to the ground to catch the sound of their coming, and then, as if satisfied, he let slip the hound, who speedily overtook and tore down seven of the fattest. When the animals were skinned and dressed, Ossian groped his way toward a large lake, in the centre of which grew a wonderful bunch of rushes. He waded into the lake, tore up the rushes, and brought to light the great Fingalian kettle, which had lain there for more than a century. Returning to his quarry, a fire was kindled, the kettle containing the seven carcasses was placed thereupon; and soon a most

savoury smell, like a general letter of invitation, flew abroad on all the winds. When the animals were stewed after the approved fashion of his ancestors, Ossian sat down to his repast. Now as, since his sojourn with the fairies, and the extermination of the Fingalians, he had never enjoyed a sufficient meal, it was his custom to gather up the superfluous folds of his stomach by wooden splints, nine in number. As he now fed and expanded, splint after splint was thrown away, as button after button burst on the jacket of the feasting boy in the story-book, till at last, when the kettle was emptied, he lay down on the grass perfectly satisfied, and silent as the ocean when the tide is full. Recovering himself, he gathered all the bones together—set fire to them, and the smoke which ascended made the roof of the firmament as black as the roof of the turf-hut at home. "Little one," then said Ossian, "go up to the knoll and tell me if you see anything." "A great bird is flying hither," said the child; and immediately the great Fingalian blackbird alighted at the feet of Ossian, who at once caught and throttled it. The fowl was carried home, and was in the

evening dressed for supper. After it was devoured, Ossian called for the stag's thigh-bone which had been the original cause of quarrel, and before the face of the astonished and convicted Peter of the Psalms, dropped it into the hollow of the black-bird's leg. Ossian died on the night of his triumph, and the only record of his songs is the volume which Peter in his rage threw into the fire, and from which, when half-consumed, it was rescued by his wife.

"But," said I, when the old gentleman had finished his story, "how came it that the big-boned Fingalians were extirpated during the hundred years that Ossian was asleep amongst the fairies?"

"Well," said the old gentleman, "a woman was the cause of that, just as a woman is the cause of most of the other misfortunes that happen in the world. I told you that this castle was built by Cuchullin, and that he and his wife lived in it. Now tallest, bravest, strongest, handsomest of all Cuchullin's warriors was Diarmid, and many a time his sword was red with the blood of the little people who came flocking over here from Ireland in their wicker and skin-covered boats. Now, when

Diarmid took off his helmet at feast, there was a fairy mole right in the centre of his forehead, just above the eyes and between his curling locks; and on this beauty spot no woman could look without becoming enamoured of him. One night Cuchullin gave a feast in the castle; the great warrior was invited; and while he sat at meat with his helmet off, Cuchullin's wife saw the star-like mole in the centre of his forehead, and incontinently fell in love with him. Cuchullin discovered his wife's passion, and began secretly to compass the death of Diarmid. He could not slay him openly for fear of his tribe; so he consulted an ancient witch who lived over the hill yonder. Long they consulted, and at last they matured their plans. Now, the Fingalians had a wonderful boar which browsed in Gasken—the green glen which you know leading down to my house—and on the back of this boar there was a poisoned bristle, which, if it pierced the hand of any man, the man would certainly die. No one knew the secret of the bristle save the witch, and the witch told it to Cuchullin. One day, therefore, when the chief and his warriors were sitting on the rocks here about, the conver-

sation was cunningly led to the boar. Cuchullin wagered the magic whistle which was slung around his neck, that the brute was so many handbreadths from the snout to the tip of the tail. Diarmid wagered the shield that he was polishing—the shield which was his mirror in peace, by the aid of which he dressed his curling locks, and with which he was wont to dazzle the eyes of his enemies on a battle day—that it was so many handbreadths less. The warriors heard the dispute and were divided in opinion; some agreeing with Cuchullin, others agreeing with Diarmid. At last it was arranged that Diarmid should go and measure the boar; so he and a number of the warriors went. In a short time they came back laughing and saying that Diarmid had won his wager, that the length of the boar was so many handbreadths, neither more nor less. Cuchullin bit his white lips when he saw them coming; and then he remembered that he had asked them to measure the boar from the snout to the tail, being the way the pile lay; whereas, in order to carry out his design, he ought to have asked them to measure the boar *against* the pile. When, therefore,

he was told that he had lost his wager, he flew into a great rage, maintained that they were all conspiring to deceive him, that the handbreadths he had wagered were the breadths of Diarmid's own hands, and declared that he would not be satisfied until Diarmid would return and measure the boar from the tip of tail to the snout. Diarmid and the rest went away; and when he reached the boar he began measuring it from the tail onward, his friends standing by to see that he was measuring properly, and counting every handbreadth. He had measured half way up the spine, when the poisoned bristle ran into his hand. 'Ah,' he said, and turned pale as if a spear had been driven into his heart. To support himself, he caught two of his friends round the neck, and in their arms he died. Then the weeping warriors raised the beautiful corpse on their shoulders and carried it to the castle, and laid it down near the drawbridge. Cuchullin then came out, and when he saw his best warrior dead he laughed as if a piece of great good fortune had befallen him, and directed that the corpse should be carried into his wife's chamber.

"But Cuchullin had cause to repent soon after.

The little black-haired people came swarming over from Ireland in their boats by hundreds and thousands, but Diarmid was not there to oppose them with his spear and shield. Every week a battle was fought, and the little people began to prevail; and by the time that Ossian made his escape from the fairies, every Fingalian, with the exception of two, slept in their big graves—and at times the peat digger comes upon their mighty bones when he is digging in the morasses."

"And the two exceptions?" said I.

"Why, that's another story," said M'Ian, "and I getting tired of legends.—Well, if you will have it, the two last Fingalians made their escape from Skye, carrying with them the magic whistle which Cuchullin wore around his neck, and took up their abode in a cave in Ross-shire. Hundreds of years after a man went into that cave, and in the half twilight of the place saw the whistle on the floor, and lifted it up. He saw it was of the strangest workmanship, and putting it to his lips he blew it. He had never heard a whistle sound so loudly and yet so sweetly. He blew it a second time, and then he heard a voice, 'Well

done, little man blow; the whistle a third time;' and turning to the place from which the sound proceeded, he saw a great rock like a man leaning on his elbow and looking up at him. 'Blow it the third time, little man, and relieve us from our bondage!' What between the voice, and the strange human-looking rock, the man got so terrified that he dropped the whistle on the floor of the cave, where it was smashed into a thousand pieces, and ran out into the daylight. He told his story; and when the cave was again visited, neither he nor his companions could see any trace of the broken whistle on the floor, nor could they discover any rock which resembled a weary man leaning on his elbow and looking up."

A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS.

THE month of August is to the year what Sunday is to the week. During that month a section of the working world rests. *Bradshaw* is consulted, portmanteaus are packed, knapsacks are strapped on, steamboats and railway carriages are crammed, and from Calais to Venice the tourist saunters and looks about him. It is absolutely necessary that the Briton should have, each year, one month's cessation from accustomed labour. He works hard, puts money in his purse, and it is his whim, when August comes, by way of recreation, to stalk deer on Highland corries, to kill salmon in Norwegian fiords, to stand on the summit of Mont Blanc, and to perambulate the pavements of Madrid, Naples, and St Petersburg. To rush over the world during vacation is a thing on which the respectable Briton sets his heart. To remain at home is to lose caste and self-respect. People do not care one rush for the Rhine; but that sacred

stream they must behold each year or die. Of all the deities Fashion has the most zealou svotaries. No one can boast a more extensive martyrology. Her worshippers are terribly sincere, and many a secret penance do they undergo, and many a flagellation do they inflict upon themselves in private.

Early in the month in which English tourists descend on the Continent in a shower of gold, it has been my custom, for several years back, to seek refuge in the Hebrides. I love Loch Snizort better than the Mediterranean, and consider Duntulme more impressive than the Drachenfels. I have never seen the Alps, but the Cuchullins content me. Haco interests me more than Charlemagne. I confess to a strong affection for those remote regions. Jaded and nervous with eleven months' labour or disappointment, *there* will a man find the medicine of silence and repose. Pleasant, after poring over books, to watch the cormorant at early morning flying with outstretched neck over the bright frith; pleasant, lying in some sunny hollow at noon, to hear the sheep bleating above; pleasant at evening to listen to wild stories of the isles told by

the peat-fire; and pleasantest of all, lying awake at midnight, to catch, muffled by distance, the thunder of the northern sea, and to think of all the ears the sound has filled. In Skye one is free of one's century; the present wheels away into silence and remoteness; you see the ranges of brown shields, and hear the shoutings of the Bare Sarks.

The benefit to be derived from vacation is a mental benefit mainly. A man does not require change of air so much as change of scene. It is well that he should for a space breathe another mental atmosphere—it is better that he should get release from the familiar cares that, like swallows, build and bring forth under the eaves of his mind, and which are continually jerking and twittering about there. New air for the lungs, new objects for the eye, new ideas for the brain—these a vacation should always bring a man; and these are to be found in Skye rather than in places more remote. In Skye the Londoner is visited with a stranger sense of foreignness than in Holland or in Italy. The island has not yet, to any considerable extent, been overrun by the tourist. To visit Skye is to make a

progress into "the dark backward and abysm of time." You turn your back on the present and walk into antiquity. You see everything in the light of Ossian, as in the light of a mournful sunset. With a Norse murmur the blue Lochs come running in. The Canongate of Edinburgh is Scottish history in stone and lime; but in Skye you stumble on matters older still. Everything about the traveller is remote and strange. You hear a foreign language; you are surrounded by Macleods, Macdonalds, and Nicolsons; you come on gray stones standing upright on the moor—marking the site of a battle, or the burial-place of a chief. You listen to traditions of ancient skirmishes; you sit on ruins of ancient date, in which Ossian might have sung. The Loch yonder was darkened by the banner of King Haco. Prince Charles wandered over this heath, or slept in that cave. The country is thinly peopled, and its solitude is felt as a burden. The precipices of the Storr lower grandly over the sea; the eagle has yet its eyrie on the ledges of the Cuchullins. The sound of the sea is continually in your ears; the silent armies of mists and vapours perpetually

deploy; the wind is gusty on the moor; and ever and anon the jags of the hills are obscured by swirls of fiercely-blown rain. And more than all, the island is pervaded by a subtle spiritual atmosphere. It is as strange to the mind as it is to the eye. Old songs and traditions are the spiritual analogues of old castles and burying-places—and old songs and traditions you have in abundance. There is a smell of the sea in the material air; and there is a ghostly something in the air of the imagination. There are prophesying voices amongst the hills of an evening. The raven that flits across your path is a weird thing—mayhap by the spell of some strong enchanter, a human soul is balefully imprisoned in the hearse-like carcass. You hear the stream, and the voice of the kelpie in it. You breathe again the air of old story-books; but they are northern, not eastern ones. To what better place, then, can the tired man go? There he will find refreshment and repose. There the wind blows out on him from another century. The Sahara itself is not a greater contrast from the London street than is the Skye wilderness.

The chain of islands on the western coast of

Scotland, extending from Bute in the throat of the Clyde, beloved of invalids, onward to St Kilda, looking through a cloud of gannets toward the polar night, was originally an appanage of the crown of Norway. In the dawn of history there is a noise of Norsemen around the islands, as there is to-day a noise of sea-birds. There fought, as old sagas tell, Anund, the stanchest warrior that ever did battle on wooden leg. *Wood-foot* he was called by his followers. When he was fighting his hardest, his men used to shove toward him a block of wood, and resting his maimed limb on that, he laid about him right manfully. From the islands also sailed Helgi, half-pagan, half-Christian. Helgi was much mixed in his faith; he was a good Christian in time of peace, but the aid of Thor he was always certain to invoke when he sailed on some dangerous expedition, or when he entered into battle. Old Norwegian castles, perched on the bold Skye headlands, yet moulder in hearing of the surge. The sea-rovers come no longer in their dark galleys, but hill and dale wear ancient names that sigh to the Norway pine. The inhabitant of Mull or Skye perusing the "Burnt Njal," is struck

most of all by the names of localities—because they are almost identical with the names of localities in his own neighbourhood. The Skye headlands of Trotternish, Greshornish, and Vaternish, look northward to Norway headlands that wear the same or similar names. Professor Munch, of Christiania, states that the names of many of the islands, Arran, Gigha, Mull, Tyree, Skye, Raasay, Lewes, and others, are in their original form Norwegian and not Gaelic. The Hebrides have received a Norse baptism. Situated as these islands are between Norway and Scotland, the Norseman found them convenient stepping-stones, or resting-places, on his way to the richer southern lands. There he erected temporary strongholds, and founded settlements. Doubtless, in course of time, the son of the Norseman looked on the daughter of the Celt, and saw that she was fair, and a mixed race was the result of alliances. To this day in the islands the Norse element is distinctly visible—not only in old castles, the names of places, but in the faces and entire mental build of the people. Claims of pure Scandinavian descent are put forward by many of the old families. Wandering up and down the islands you

encounter faces that possess no Celtic characteristics; which carry the imagination to

"Noroway ower the faem;"

people with cool calm blue eyes, and hair yellow as the dawn; who are resolute and persistent, slow in pulse and speech; and who differ from the explosive Celtic element surrounding them as the iron headland differs from the fierce surge that washes it, or a block of marble from the heated palm pressed against it. The Hebrideans are a mixed race; in them the Norseman and the Celt are combined, and here and there is a dash of Spanish blood which makes brown the cheek and darkens the eye. This southern admixture may have come about through old trading relations with the Peninsula—perhaps the wrecked Armada may have had something to do with it. The Highlander of Sir Walter, like the Red Indian of Cooper, is to a large extent an ideal being. But as Uncas does really wear war-paint, wield a tomahawk, scalp his enemies, and, when the time comes, can stoically die, so the Highlander possesses many of the qualities popularly ascribed to him. Scott exaggerated only; he did not invent. He looked with a poet's eye on the district north of the

Grampians—a vision keener than any other for what *is*, but which burdens, and supplements, and glorifies—which, in point of fact, puts a nimbus around everything. The Highlander stands alone amongst the British people. For generations his land was shut against civilisation by mountain and forest and intricate pass. While the large drama of Scottish history was being played out in the Lowlands, he was busy in his mists with narrow clan-fights and revenges. While the southern Scot owed allegiance to the Jameses, he was subject to Lords of the Isles, and to Duncans and Donalds innumerable; while the one thought of Flodden, the other remembered the "sair field of the Harlaw." The Highlander was, and is still so far as circumstances permit, a proud, loving, punctilious being: full of loyalty, careful of social distinction; with a bared head for his chief, a jealous eye for his equal, an armed heel for his inferior. He loved the valley in which he was born, the hills on the horizon of his childhood; his sense of family relationship was strong, and around him widening rings of cousinship extended to the very verge of the clan. The Isles-

man is a Highlander of the Highlanders; modern life took longer in reaching him, and his weeping climate, his misty wreaths and vapours, and the silence of his moory environments, naturally continued to act upon and to shape his character. He is song-loving, "of imagination all compact;" and out of the natural phenomena of his mountain region —his mist and rain-cloud, wan sea-setting of the moon, stars glancing through rifts of vapour, blowing wind and broken rainbows—he has drawn his poetry and his superstition. His mists give him the shroud high on the living heart, the sea-foam gives him an image of the whiteness of the breasts of his girls, and the broken rainbow of their blushes. To a great extent his climate has made him what he is. He is a child of the mist. His songs are melancholy for the most part; and you may discover in his music the monotony of the brown moor, the seethe of the wave on the rock, the sigh of the wind in the long grasses of the deserted churchyard. The musical instrument in which he chiefly delights renders most successfully the coronach and the battle-march. The Highlands are now open to all the influences of civilisation.

The inhabitants wear breeches and speak English even as we. Old gentlemen peruse their *Times* with spectacles on nose. Young lads construe "Cornelius Nepos," even as in other quarters of the British islands. Young ladies knit, and practise music, and wear crinoline. But the old descent and breeding are visible through all modern disguises: and your Highlander at Oxford or Cambridge—discoverable not only by his rocky countenance, but by some dash of wild blood, or eccentricity, or enthusiasm, or logical twist and turn of thought—is as much a child of the mist as his ancestor who, three centuries ago, was called a "wilde man" or a "red shanks;" who could, if need were, live on a little oatmeal, sleep in snow, and, with one hand on the stirrup, keep pace with the swiftest horse, let the rider spur never so fiercely. It is in the Isles, however, and particularly amongst the old Islesmen, that the Highland character is, at this day, to be found in its purity. There, in the dwelling of the proprietor, or still more in that of the large sheep farmer—who is of as good blood as the laird himself—you find the hospitality, the prejudice, the generosity,

the pride of birth, the delight in ancient traditions, which smack of the antique time. Love of wandering, and pride in military life, have been characteristic of all the old families. The pen is alien to their fingers, but they have wielded the sword industriously. They have had representatives in every Peninsular and Indian battle-field. India has been the chosen field of their activity. Of the miniatures kept in every family more than one-half are soldiers, and several have attained to no inconsiderable rank. The Island of Skye has itself given to the British and Indian armies at least a dozen generals. And in other services the Islesman has drawn his sword. Marshal Macdonald had Hebridean blood in his veins; and my friend Mr M'Ian remembers meeting him at Armadale Castle while hunting up his relations in the island, and tells me that he looked like a Jesuit in his long coat. And lads, to whom the profession of arms has been shut, have gone to plant indigo in Bengal or coffee in Ceylon, and have returned with gray hairs to the island to spend their money there, and to make the stony soil a little greener; and during their thirty years of absence Gaelic did not

moulder on their tongues, nor did their fingers forget their cunning with the pipes. The palm did not obliterate the memory of the birch; nor the slow up-swelling of the tepid wave, and its long roar of frothy thunder on the flat red sands at Madras, the coasts of their childhood and the smell and smoke of burning kelp.

The important names in Skye are Macdonald and Macleod. Both are of great antiquity, and it is as difficult to discover the source of either in history as it is to discover the source of the Nile in the deserts of Central Africa. Distance in the one case appals the geographer, and in the other the antiquary. Macdonald is of pure Celtic origin, it is understood; Macleod was originally a Norseman. Macdonald was the Lord of the Isles, and more than once crossed swords with Scottish kings. Time has stripped him of royalty, and the present representative of the family is a Baron merely. He sits in his modern castle of Armadale amid pleasant larch plantations, with the figure of Somerlid—the half mythical founder of his race—in the large window of his hall. The two families intermarried often and quarrelled

oftener. They put wedding rings on each other's fingers and dirks into each other's hearts. Of the two, Macleod had the darker origin; and around his name there lingers a darker poetry. Macdonald sits in his new castle in sunny Sleat with a southern outlook—Macleod retains his old eyrie at Dunvegan, with its drawbridge and dungeons. At night he can hear the sea beating on the base of his rock. His "maidens" are wet with the sea foam. His mountain "tables" are shrouded with the mists of the Atlantic. He has a fairy flag in his possession. The rocks and mountains around him wear his name even as of old did his clansmen. "Macleod's country," the people yet call the northern portion of the island. In Skye song and tradition Macdonald is like the green strath with milkmaids milking kine in the fold at sunset, with fishers singing songs as they mend brown nets on the shore. Macleod, on the other hand, is of darker and drearier import—like a wild rocky spire of Quirang or Storr, dimmed with the flying vapour and familiar with the voice of the blast and the wing of the raven. "Macleod's country" looks toward Norway with the pale headlands of Greshor-

nish, Trotternish, and Durinish. The portion of the island which Macdonald owns is comparatively soft and green, and lies to the south.

The Western Islands lie mainly out of the region of Scottish history, and yet by Scottish history they are curiously touched at intervals, Skye more particularly so. In 1263 when King Haco set out on his great expedition against Scotland with one hundred ships and twenty thousand men—an Armada, the period taken into consideration, quite as formidable as the more famous and ill-fated Spanish one some centuries later—the multitude of his sails darkened the Skye lochs. Snizort speaks of him yet. He passed through the Kyles, breathed for a little while at Kerrera, and then swept down on the Ayrshire coast, where King Alexander awaited him, and where the battle of Largs was fought.*

* This battle occupies the same place in early Scottish annals that Trafalgar or Waterloo occupies in later British ones. It stands in the dawn of Scottish history—resonant, melodious. Unhappily, however, the truth must be told—the battle was a drawn one, neither side being able to claim the victory. Professor Munch, in his notes to "The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys," gives the following account of the combat, and of the negotiations that preceded it:—

"When King Hacon appeared off Ayr, and anchored at Arran, King Alexander, who appears to have been present himself at Ayr, or in the neighbourhood of the town, with the greater part of his

After the battle Haco, grievously tormented by tempests, sailed for Norway, where he died. This was the last invasion of the Northmen, and a few

forces, now opened negotiations, sending several messages by Franciscan or Dominican Friars for the purpose of treating for peace. Nor did King Hacon show himself unwilling to negotiate, and proved this sufficiently by permitting Eogan of Argyll to depart in peace, loading him, moreover, with presents, on the condition that he should do his best to bring about a reconciliation,—Eogan pledging himself, if he did not succeed, to return to King Hacon. Perhaps it was due to the exertions of Eogan, that a truce was concluded, in order to commence negotiations in a more formal manner. King Hacon now despatched an embassy, consisting of two bishops, Gilbert of Hamar, and Henry of Orkney, with three barons, to Alexander, whom they found at Ayr. They were well received, but could not get any definite answer,—Alexander alleging that, before proposing the conditions, he must consult with his councillors; this done, he should not fail to let King Hacon know the result. The Norwegian messengers, therefore, returned to their king, who meanwhile had removed to Bute. The next day, however, messengers arrived from King Alexander, bringing a list of those isles which he would not resign,—viz., Arran, Bute, and the Cumreys, (that is, generally speaking, the isles inside Kentire,) which implies that he now offered to renounce his claim to all the others. It is certainly not to be wondered at that he did not like to see those isles, which commanded the entrance to the Clyde, in the hands of another power. King Hacon, however, had prepared another list, which contained the names of all those isles which he claimed for the crown of Norway; and although the exact contents are not known, there can be no doubt that at least Arran and Bute were among the number. The Saga says that, on the whole, there was, after all, no great difference, but that, nevertheless, no final reconciliation could be obtained,—the Scotchmen trying only to protract the negotiations because the summer was past, and the bad weather was

years after the islands were formally ceded to Scotland. Although ceded, however, they could hardly be said to be ruled by the Scottish kings.

begun. The Scotch messengers at last returned, and King Hacon removed with the fleet to the Cumreys, near Largs, in the direction of Cuningham, no doubt with a view of being either nearer at hand if the negotiations failed, and a landing was to be effected, or only of intimidating his opponents and hastening the conclusion of the peace, as the roadstead in itself seems to have been far less safe than that of Lamlash or Bute. King Alexander sent, indeed, several messages, and it was agreed to hold a new congress a little farther up in the country, which shows that King Alexander now had removed from Ayr to a spot nearer Largs, perhaps to Camphill, (on the road from Largs to Kilbirnie,) where a local tradition states the king encamped. The Norwegian messengers were, as before, some bishops and barons; the Scotch commissaries were some knights and monks. The deliberations were long, but still without any result. At last, when the day was declining, a crowd of Scotchmen began to gather, and, as it continued to increase, the Norwegians, not thinking themselves safe, returned without having obtained anything. The Norwegian warriors now demanded earnestly that the truce should be renounced, because their provisions had begun to be scarce, and they wanted to plunder. King Hacon accordingly sent one of his esquires, named Kolbein, to King Alexander with the letter issued by this monarch, ordering him to claim back that given by himself, and thus declare the truce to be ended, previously, however, proposing that both kings should meet at the head of their respective armies, and try a personal conference before coming to extremities; only, if that failed, they might go to battle as the last expedient. King Alexander, however, did not declare his intention plainly, and Kolbein, tired of waiting, delivered up the letter, got that of King Hacon back, and thus rescinded the truce. He was escorted to the ships by two monks. Kolbein, when reporting to King Hacon his proceedings, told him that Eogan of Argyll

After the termination of the Norway government, the Hebrides were swayed by the Macdonalds, who called themselves Lords of the Isles. These chief-

had earnestly tried to persuade King Alexander from fighting with the Norwegians. It does not seem, however, that Eogan went back to King Hacon according to his promise. This monarch now was greatly exasperated, and desired the Scottish monks, when returning, to tell their king that he would very soon recommence the hostilities, and try the issue of a battle.

"Accordingly, King Hacon detached King Dugald, Alan M'Rory his brother, Angus of Isla, Murchard of Kentire, and two Norwegian commanders, with sixty ships, to sail into Loch Long, and ravage the circumjacent ports, while he prepared to land himself with the main force at Largs, and fight the Scottish army. The detachment does not appear to have met with any serious resistance, all the Scotch forces being probably collected near Largs. The banks of Loch Lomond and the whole of Lennox were ravaged. Angus even ventured across the country to the other side, probably near Stirling, killing men and taking a great number of cattle. This done, the troops who had been on shore returned to the ships. Here, however, a terrible storm, which blew for two days, (Oct. 1 and 2,) wrecked ten vessels; and one of the Norwegian captains was taken sick, and died suddenly.

"Also the main fleet, off Largs, suffered greatly by the same tempest. It began in the night between Sunday (Sept. 30) and Monday (Oct. 1,) accompanied by violent showers. A large transport vessel drifted down on the bow of the royal ship, swept off the gallion, and got foul of the cable; it was at last cast loose and drifted toward the island; but on the royal ship it had been necessary to remove the usual awnings and covers, and in the morning (Oct. 1) when the flood commenced, the wind likewise turned, and the vessel, along with another vessel of transport and a ship of war, was driven on the main beach, where it stuck fast, the royal ship drifting down while with five anchors, and only stopped when the

tains waxed powerful, and they more than once led the long-haired Islesmen into Scotland, where they murdered, burned, and ravaged without

eighth had been let go. The king had found it safest to land in a boat on the Cumrey, with the clergy, who celebrated mass, the greater part believing that the tempest had been raised by witch-craft. Soon the other ships began to drift; several had to cut away the masts; five drifted towards the shore, and three went aground. The men on board these ships were now dangerously situated, because the Scotch, who from their elevated position could see very well what passed in the fleet, sent down detachments against them, while the storm prevented their comrades in the fleet from coming to their aid. They manned, however, the large vessel which had first drifted on shore, and defended themselves as well as they could against the superior force of the enemy, who began shooting at them. Happily the storm abated a little, and the king was not only able to return on board his ships, but even sent them some aid in boats; the Scotch were put to flight, and the Norwegians were able to pass the night on shore. Yet, in the dark, some Scots found their way to the vessel and took what they could. In the morning (Tuesday, Oct. 2,) the king himself, with some barons and some troops, went to shore in boats to secure the valuable cargo of the transport, or what was left of it, in which they succeeded. Now, however, the main army of the Scots was seen approaching, and the king, who at first meant to remain on shore and head his troops himself, was prevailed upon by his men, who feared lest he should expose himself too much, to return on board his ship. The number of the Norwegians left on shore did not exceed 1000 men, 240 of whom, commanded by the Baron Agmund Krokidans, occupied a hillock, the rest were stationed on the beach. The Scotch, it is related in the Saga, had about 600 horsemen in armour, several of whom had Spanish steeds, all covered with mail; they had a great deal of infantry, well armed, especially with bows and Lochaber axes. The Norwegians believed that King Alexander himself was in the

mercy. In 1411 Donald, one of those island kings, descended on the mainland, and was sorely defeated by the Earl of Mar at Harlaw, near Aber-

army: perhaps this is true. We learn, however, from Fordun that the real commander was Alexander of Dundonald, the Stewart of Scotland. The Scotch first attacked the knoll with the 240 men, who retired slowly, always facing the enemy and fighting; but in retracing their steps down hill, as they could not avoid accelerating their movement as the impulse increased, those on the beach believed that they were routed, and a sudden panic betook them for a moment, which cost many lives; as the boats were too much crowded they sank with their load; others, who did not reach the boats, fled in a southerly direction, and were pursued by the Scotch, who killed many of them; others sought refuge in the aforesaid stranded vessel: at last they rallied behind one of the stranded ships of war, and an obstinate battle began; the Norwegians, now that the panic was over, fighting desperately. Then it was that the young and valiant Piers of Curry, of whom even Fordun and Wyntown speak, was killed by the Norwegian baron Andrew Nicholasson, after having twice ridden through the Norwegian ranks. The storm for a while prevented King Hacon from aiding his men, and the Scotch being tenfold stronger, began to get the upper hand; but at last two barons succeeded in landing with fresh troops, when the Scotch were gradually driven back upon the knoll, and then put to flight towards the hills. This done, the Norwegians returned on board the ships; on the following morning (Oct. 3) they returned on shore to carry away the bodies of the slain, which, it appears, they effected quite unmolested by the enemy; all the bodies were carried to a church, no doubt in Bute, and there buried. The next day, (Thursday, Oct. 4,) the king removed his ship farther out under the island, and the same day the detachment arrived which had been sent to Loch Long. The following day, (Friday, Oct. 5,) the weather being fair, the king sent men on shore to burn the stranded ships, which likewise appears to

deen. By another potentate of the same stock the counties of Ross and Moray were ravaged in 1456. In the Western Islands the Macdonalds exercised authentic sovereignty; they owned allegiance to the Scottish king when he penetrated into their remote dominions, and disowned it whenever he turned his back. The Macdonald dynasty, or *quasi* dynasty, existed till 1536, when the last Lord of the Isles died without an heir, and when there was no shoulder on which the mantle of his authority could fall.

How the Macdonalds came into their island throne it would be difficult, by the flickering rush-light of history, to discover. But wandering up

have been effected without any hindrance from the enemy. On the same day he removed with the whole fleet to Lamlash harbour."

With what a curious particularity the Saga relates the events of this smokeless ancient combat—so different from modern ones, where "the ranks are rolled in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound" —and how Piers of Curry, "who had ridden twice through the Norwegian ranks," towers amongst the combatants! As the describer of battles, since the invention of gunpowder, Homer would be no better than Sir Archibald Alison. We have more explicit information as to this skirmish on the Ayrshire coast in the thirteenth century than we have concerning the battle of Solferino; and yet King Hacon has been in his grave these five centuries, and Napoleon III. and Kaiser Joseph yet live. And "Our Own Correspondent" had not come into the world at that date either.

and down the islands, myself and the narrator swathed in a film of blue peat-smoke, a ray of dusty light streaming in through the green bull's-eye in the window, I have heard the following account given:—The branches of the Macdonald family, Macdonald of Sleat, Clanranald, who wears the white heather in his bonnet, the analogue of the white rose, and which has been dipped in blood quite as often, Keppoch, one of whose race fell at Culloden, and the rest, were descended from a certain Godfrey, King of Argyll. This Godfrey had four sons, and one of them was named Somerlid, youngest, bravest, handsomest of all. But unhappily Somerlid was without ambition. While his brothers were burning and ravaging and slaying, grasping lands and running away with rich heiresses, after the fashion of promising young gentlemen of that era, the indolent and handsome giant employed himself in hunting and fishing. His looking-glass was the stream; his drinking-cup the heel of his shoe; he would rather spear a salmon than spear his foe; he burned no churches, the only throats he cut were the throats of deer; he cared more to caress the skins of seals and

otters than the shining hair of women. Old Godfrey liked the lad's looks, but had a contempt for his peaceful ways, and, shaking his head, thought him little better than a ne'er-do-weel or a silly one. But for all that, there was a deal of unsuspected matter in Somerlid. At present he was peaceful as a torch or a beacon—unlit. The hour was coming when he would be changed; when he would blaze like a brandished torch, or a beacon on a hill-top against which the wind is blowing.

It so happened that the men of the Western Isles had lost their chief. There was no one to lead them to battle, and it was absolutely necessary that a leader should be procured. Much meditating to whom they should offer their homage they bethought themselves of the young hunter chasing deer on the Argyllshire hills. A council was held; and it was resolved that a deputation should be sent to Somerlid to state their case, and to offer that if he should accept the office of chieftain, he and his children should be their chieftains for ever. In some half-dozen galleys the deputation set sail, and finally arrived at the court of old Godfrey. When they told what they wanted, that potentate

sent them to seek Somerlid; and him they found fishing. Somerlid listened to their words with an unmoved countenance; and when they were done, he went aside a little to think over the matter. That done he came forward: "Islesmen," he said, "there's a newly-run salmon in the black pool yonder. If I catch him, I shall go with you as your chief; if I catch him not, I shall remain where I am." To this the men of the Isles were agreeable, and they sat down on the banks of the river to watch the result. Somerlid threw his line over the black pool, and in a short time the silvery mail of the salmon was gleaming on the yellow sands of the river bank. When they saw this the Islesmen shouted; and so after bidding farewell to his father, the elect of the thousands stepped into the largest galley, and with the others in his wake, sailed toward Skye a chief!

When was there a warrior like Somerlid? He spoiled and ravaged like an eagle. He delighted in battle. He rolled his garments in blood. He conquered island after island; he went out with empty galleys, and he returned with them filled with prey, his oarsmen singing his praises. He

built up his island throne. He was the first Lord of the Isles; and from his loins sprung all the Lords of the Isles that ever were. He was a Macdonald, and from him the Macdonalds of Sleat are descended. He wore a tartan of his own, which only the Prince of Wales and the young Lord Macdonald, sitting to-day in Eton school, are entitled to wear. And if at any time I ventured to impugn the truth of this legend, I was told that if I went to Armadale Castle I should see the image of Somerlid in the great window of the hall. That was surely confirmation of the truth of the story. He must surely be a sceptical Sassenach who would disbelieve after witnessing *that.*

Although the Lords of the Isles exercised virtual sovereignty in the Hebrides, the Jameses made many attempts to break their power and bring them into subjection. James I. penetrated into the Highlands, and assembled a Parliament at Inverness in 1427. He enticed many of the chiefs to his court, and seized, imprisoned, and executed several of the more powerful. Those who escaped with their lives were forced to deliver up hostages. In fact, the Scottish kings looked upon the High-

landers very much as they looked upon the borderers. In moments of fitful energy they broke on the Highlands just as they broke upon Ettrick and Liddesdale, and hanged and executed right and left. One of the Acts of Parliament of James IV. declared that the Highlands and Islands had become savage for want of a proper administration of justice; and James V. made a voyage to the Islands in 1536, when many of the chiefs were captured and carried away. It was about this time that the last Lord of the Isles died. The Jameses were now kings of the Highlands and Islands, but they were only kings in a nominal sense. Every chief regarded himself as a sort of independent prince. The Highland chieftains appeared at Holyrood, it is true; but they drew dirks and shed blood in the presence; they were wanting in reverence for the sceptre; they brought their own feuds with them to the Scottish court, and when James VI. attempted to dissolve these feuds in the wine cup, he met with but indifferent success. So slight was lawful authority in 1589 that the island of the Lewes was granted by the crown to a body of Fife gentlemen, if they would but take and

hold possession—just as the lands of the rebellious Maories might be granted to the colonists at the present day.

Many a gallant ship of the Spanish Armada was wrecked on the shores of the Western Islands, on the retreat to Spain; and a gun taken from one of these, it is said, lies at Dunstaffnage Castle. In the Islands you yet come across Spanish names, and traces of Spanish blood; and the war ships of Spain that came to grief on the bleak headlands of Skye and Lewes, may have something to do with that. Where the vase is broken there still lingers the scent of the roses. The connexion between Spain and the Western Islands is little more than a mere accident of tempest. Then came the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James to the English throne; and the time was fast approaching when the Highlander would become a more important personage than ever; when the claymore would make its mark in British History.

At first sight it is a matter of wonder that the clans should ever have become Jacobite. They were in nowise indebted to the house of Stuart. With the Scottish kings the Highlands and Islands

were almost continually at war. When a James came amongst the northern chieftains he carried an ample death-warrant in his face. The presents he brought were the prison key, the hangman's rope, the axe of the executioner. When the power departed from the Lords of the Isles, the clans regarded the king who sat in Holyrood as their nominal superior; but they were not amenable to any central law; each had its own chief—was self-contained, self-governed, and busy with its own private revenges and forays. When the Lowland burgher was busy with commerce, and the Lowland farmer was busy with his crops, the clansman walked his misty mountains very much as his fathers did centuries before; and his hand was as familiar with the hilt of his broadsword as the hand of the Perth burgher with the ellwand, or that of the farmer of the Lothians with the plough-shaft. The Lowlander had become industrious and commercial; the Highlander still loved the skirmish and the raid. The Lowlands had become rich in towns, in money, in goods; the Highlands were rich only in swordsmen. When Charles's troubles with his Parliament began, the valour of the Highlands was wasting itself; and

Montrose was the first man who saw how that valour could be utilised. Himself a feudal chief, and full of feudal feeling, when he raised the banner of the king he appealed to the ancient animosities of the clans. His arch-foe was Argyll; he knew that Campbell was a widely-hated name; and that hate he made his recruiting sergeant. He bribed the chiefs, but his bribe was revenge. The mountaineers flocked to his standard; but they came to serve themselves rather than to serve Charles. The defeat of Argyll might be a good thing for the king; but with that they had little concern—it was the sweetest of private revenges, and righted a century of wrongs. The Macdonalds of Sleat fought under the great Marquis at Inverlochy; but the Skye shepherd considers only that on that occasion his forefathers had a grand slaying of their hereditary enemies—he has no idea that the interest of the king was at all involved in the matter. While the battle was proceeding, blind Allan sat on the castle walls with a little boy beside him; the boy related how the battle went, and the bard wove the incidents into extemporaneous song—full of scorn and taunts when the retreat of Argyll in

his galley is described—full of exultation when the bonnets of fifteen hundred dead Campbells are seen floating in the Lochy—and blind Allan's song you can hear repeated in Skye at this day. When the splendid career of Montrose came to an end at Philiphaugh, the clansmen who won his battles for him were no more adherents of the king than they had been centuries before: but then they had gratified hatred; they had had ample opportunities for plunder; the chiefs had gained a new importance; they had been assured of the royal gratitude and remembrance; and if they received but scant supplies of royal gold, they were promised argosies. By fighting under Montrose they were in a sense committed to the cause of the king; and when at a later date Claverhouse again raised the royal standard, that argument was successfully used. They had already served the house of Stuart; they had gained victories in its behalf: the king would not always be in adversity; the time would come when he would be able to reward his friends; having put their hands to the plough it would be folly to turn back. And so a second time the clans rose, and at Killiecrankie an avalanche of kilted

men broke the royal lines, and in a quarter of an hour a disciplined army was in ruins, and the bed of the raging Garry choked with corpses. By this time the Stuart cause had gained a footing in the Highlands, mainly from the fact that the clans had twice fought in its behalf. Then a dark whisper of the massacre of Glencoe passed through the glens—and the clansmen believed that the princes *they* had served would not have violated every claim of hospitality, and shot them down so on their own hearthstones. All this confirmed the growing feeling of attachment to the king across the water. When the Earl of Mar rose in 1715, Macdonald of Sleat joined him with his men; and being sent out to drive away a party of the enemy who had appeared on a neighbouring height, opened the battle of Sheriffmuir. In 1745, when Prince Charles landed in Knoydart, he sent letters to Macdonald and Macleod in Skye soliciting their aid. Between them they could have brought 2000 claymores into the field; and had the prince brought a foreign force with them, they might have complied with his request. As it was, they hesitated, and finally resolved to range themselves on

the side of the Government. Not a man from Sleat fought under the prince. The other great branches of the Macdonald family, Clanranald, Keppoch, and Glengarry, joined him however; and Keppoch at Culloden, when he found that his men were broken, and would not rally at the call of their chief, charged the English lines alone, and was brought down by a musket bullet.

The Skye gentlemen did not rise at the call of the prince, but when his cause was utterly lost, a Skye lady came to his aid, and rendered him essential service. Neither at the time, nor afterwards, did Flora Macdonald consider herself a heroine, (although Grace Darling herself did not bear a braver heart ;) and she is noticeable to this day in history, walking demurely with the white rose in her bosom. When the prince met Miss Macdonald in Benbecula, he was in circumstances sufficiently desperate. The lady had expressed an anxious desire to see Charles ; and at their meeting, which took place in a hut belonging to her brother, it struck Captain O'Neil, an officer attached to the prince, and at the moment the sole companion of his wanderings, that she might carry Charles with

her to Skye in the disguise of her maid-servant. Miss Macdonald consented. She procured a six-oared boat, and when she and her companions entered the hovel in which the prince lay, they found him engaged in roasting for dinner with a wooden spit the heart, liver, and kidneys of a sheep. They were full of compassion, of course; but the prince, who possessed the wit as well as the courage of his family, turned his misfortunes into jests. The party sat down to dinner not uncareless of state. Flora sat on the right hand, and Lady Clanranald, one of Flora's companions, on the left hand of the prince. They talked of St James's as they sat at their rude repast; and stretching out hands of hope, warmed themselves at the fire of the future.

After dinner Charles equipped himself in the attire of a maid-servant. His dress consisted of a flowered linen gown, a light-coloured quilted petticoat, a white apron, and a mantle of dun camlet, made after the Irish fashion, with a hood. They supped on the sea-shore; and while doing so a messenger arrived with the intelligence that a body of military was in the neighbourhood in quest

of the fugitive, and on hearing this news Lady Clanranald immediately went home. They sailed in the evening with a fair wind, but they had not rowed above a league when a storm arose, and Charles had to support the spirits of his companions by singing songs and making merry speeches. They came in sight of the pale Skye headlands in the morning, and as they coasted along the shore they were fired on by a party of Macleod militia. While the bullets were falling around, the prince and Flora lay down in the bottom of the boat. The militia were probably indifferent marksmen; at all events no one was hurt.

After coasting along for a space, they landed at Mugstot, the seat of Sir Alexander Macdonald. Lady Macdonald was a daughter of the Earl of Eglinton's, and an avowed Jacobite; and as it was known that Sir Alexander was at Fort Augustus with the Duke of Cumberland, they had no scruple in seeking protection. Charles was left in the boat, and Flora went forward to apprise Lady Macdonald of their arrival. Unhappily, however, there was a Captain Macleod, an officer of militia, in the house, and Flora had to parry as best she could his in-

terrogations concerning Charles, whose head was worth £30,000. Lady Macdonald was in great alarm lest the presence of the prince should be discovered. Kingsburgh, Sir Alexander's factor, was on the spot, and the ladies took him into their confidence. After consultation, it was agreed that Skye was unsafe, and that Charles should proceed at once to Raasay, taking up his residence at Kingsburgh by the way.

During all this while Charles remained on the shore, feeling probably very much as a Charles of another century did, when, shrouded up in oak foliage, he heard the Roundhead riding beneath. Kingsburgh was anxious to acquaint him with the determination of his friends, but then there was the pestilent captain on the premises, who might prick his ear at a whisper; and whose suspicion, if once aroused, might blaze out into ruinous action. Kingsburgh had concerted his plan, but in carrying it into execution it behoved him to tread so lightly that the blind mole should not hear a footfall. He sent a servant down to the shore to inform the strange maid-servant with the mannish stride that he meant to visit her, but that in the

meantime she should screen herself from observation behind a neighbouring hill. Taking with him wine and provisions, Kingsburgh went out in search of the prince. He searched for a considerable time without finding him, and was about to return to the house, when at some little distance he observed a scurry amongst a flock of sheep. Knowing that sheep did not scurry about after that fashion for their own amusement, he approached the spot, when all at once the prince started out upon him like another Meg Merrilees, a large knotted stick in his fist. "I am Macdonald of Kingsburgh," said the visitor, "come to serve your highness." "It is well," said Charles, saluting him. Kingsburgh then opened out his plan, with which the prince expressed himself satisfied. After Charles had partaken of some refreshment, they both started towards Kingsburgh House.

The ladies at Mugstot were all this while in sad perplexity, and to that perplexity, on account of the presence of the captain of militia, they could not give utterance. As Kingsburgh had not returned, they could only hope that he had succeeded in finding the prince, and in removing him

from that dangerous neighbourhood. Meanwhile dinner was announced, and the captain politely handed in the ladies. He drank his wine, paid Miss Macdonald his most graceful compliments, for a captain—if even of militia only—can never, in justice to his cloth, be indifferent to the fair. It belongs to his profession to be gallant, as it belongs to the profession of a clergyman to say grace before meat. We may be sure, however, that his roses of compliment stung like nettles. He talked of the prince, as a matter of course—the prince being the main topic of conversation in the Islands at the period—perhaps expressed a strong desire to catch him. All this the ladies had to endure, hiding, as the way of the sex is, fluttering hearts under countenances most hypocritically composed. After dinner, Flora rose at once, but a look from Lady Macdonald induced her to remain for yet a little. Still the gallant captain's talk flowed on, and *he* must be deceived at any cost. At last Miss Flora was moved with the most filial feelings. She was anxious to be with her mother, to stay and comfort her in these troublous times. She must really be going. Lady Macdonald pressed her to stay, got

the gallant captain to bring his influence to bear, but with no effect. The wilful young lady would not listen to entreaty. Her father was absent, and at such a time the claim of a lone mother on a daughter's attention was paramount. Her apology was accepted at last, but only on the condition that she should return soon to Mugstot and make a longer stay. The ladies embraced each other, and then Miss Macdonald mounted, and attended by several servants rode after Prince Charles, who was now some distance on the road to Kingsburgh. Lady Macdonald returned to the captain, than whom seldom has one—whether of the line or the militia—been more cleverly hoodwinked.

Miss Macdonald's party, when she rode after the prince and Kingsburgh, consisted of Neil M'Eachan, who acted as guide, and Mrs Macdonald, who was attended by a male and female servant. They overtook the prince, and Mrs Macdonald, who had never seen him before, was anxious to obtain a peep of his countenance. This Charles carefully avoided. Mrs Macdonald's maid, noticing the uncouth appearance of the tall female figure, whispered to Miss Flora that she

"had never seen such an impudent-looking woman as the one with whom Kingsburgh was talking," and expressed her belief that the stranger was either an Irishwoman, or a man in woman's clothes. Miss Flora whispered in reply, "that she was right in her conjecture—that the amazon was really an Irishwoman, that she knew her, having seen her before." The abigail then exclaimed, "Bless me, what long strides the jade takes, and how awkwardly she manages her clothes!" Miss Macdonald, wishing to put an end to this conversation, urged the party to a trot. The pedestrians then struck across the hills, and reached Kingsburgh House about eleven o'clock,—the equestrians arriving soon after.

When they arrived there was some difficulty about supper, Mrs Macdonald of Kingsburgh having retired to rest. When her husband told her that the prince was in the house, she got up immediately, and under her direction the board was spread. The viands were eggs, butter, and cheese. Charles supped heartily, and after drinking a few glasses of wine, and smoking a pipe of tobacco, went to bed. Next morning there

was a discussion as to the clothes he should wear; Kingsburgh, fearing that his disguise should become known, urged Charles to wear a Highland dress, to which he gladly agreed. But as there were sharp eyes of servants about, it was arranged that, to prevent suspicion, he should leave the house in the same clothes in which he had come, and that he should change his dress on the road. When he had dressed himself in his feminine garments and come into the sitting-room, Charles noticed that the ladies were whispering together eagerly, casting looks on him the while. He desired to know the subject of conversation, and was informed by Mrs Macdonald that they wished a lock of his hair. The prince consented at once, and laying down his head in Miss Flora's lap, a lock of yellow hair was shorn off—to be treasured as the dearest of family relics, and guarded as jealously as good fame. Some silken threads of that same lock of hair I have myself seen. Mr M'Ian has some of it in a ring, which will probably be buried with him. After the hair was cut off, Kingsburgh presented the prince with a new pair of shoes, and the old ones—through which the

toes protruded—were put aside, and considered as only less sacred than the shred of hair. They were afterwards bought by a Jacobite gentleman for twenty guineas—the highest recorded price ever paid for that article.

Kingsburgh, Flora, and the prince then started for Portree, Kingsburgh carrying the Highland dress under his arm. After walking a short distance Charles entered a wood and changed his attire. He now wore a tartan short coat and waistcoat, with philabeg and hose, a plaid, and a wig and bonnet. Here Kingsburgh parted from the prince, and returned home. Conducted by a guide, Charles then started across the hills, while Miss Macdonald galloped along the common road to Portree to see how the land lay, and to become acquainted with the rumours stirring in the country.

There was considerable difficulty in getting the prince out of Skye ; a Portree crew could not be trusted, as on their return they might blab the whereabouts of the fugitive. In this dilemma a friend of the prince's bethought himself that there was a small boat on one of the neighbouring Lochs,

and the boat was dragged by two brothers, aided by some women, across a mile of boggy ground to the sea-shore. It was utterly unseaworthy—leaky as the old brogues which Kingsburgh valued so much—but the two brothers nothing fearing got it launched, and rowed across to Raasay.

When the news came that the prince was at hand, Young Raasay, who had not been out in the rebellion, and his cousin, Malcolm Macleod, who had been, procured a strong boat, and with two oarsmen, whom they had sworn to secrecy, pulled across to Skye. They landed about half a mile from Portree, and Malcolm Macleod, accompanied by one of the men, went towards the inn, where he found the prince and Miss Macdonald. It had been raining heavily, and before he arrived, Charles was soaked to the skin. The first thing the prince called for was a dram ; he then put on a dry shirt, and after that he made a hearty meal on roasted fish, bread, cheese, and butter. The people in the inn had no suspicion of his rank, and with them he talked and joked. Malcolm Macleod had by this time gone back to the boat, where he waited the prince's coming. The guide implored Charles to

go off at once, pointed out that the inn was a gathering place for all sorts of people, and that some one might penetrate his disguise—to all this the prince gave ready assent; but it rained still, and he spoke of risking everything and waiting where he was all night. The guide became yet more urgent, and the prince at last expressed his readiness to leave, only before going he wished to smoke a pipe of tobacco. He smoked his pipe, bade farewell to Miss Macdonald, repaid her a small sum which he had borrowed, gave her his miniature, and expressed the hope that he should yet welcome her at St James's. Early in the dawn of the July morning, with four shirts, a bottle of brandy tied to one side of his belt, a bottle of whisky tied to the other, and a cold fowl done up in a pocket-handkerchief, he, under the direction of a guide, went down to the rocky shore, where the boat had so long been waiting. In a few hours they reached Raasay.

In Raasay the prince did not remain long. He returned to Skye, abode for a space in Strath, dwelling in strange places, and wearing many disguises—finally, through the aid of the chief of the

Mackinnons, he reached the mainland. By this time it had become known to the Government that the prince had been wandering about the island, and Malcolm Macleod, Kingsburgh, and Miss Macdonald were apprehended. Miss Macdonald was at first confined in Dunstaffnage Castle, and was afterwards conveyed to London. Her imprisonment does not seem to have been severe, and she was liberated, it is said, at the special request of Frederick Prince of Wales. She and Malcolm Macleod returned to Scotland together. In 1750 Flora married Allan Macdonald, young Kingsburgh, and on the death of his father in 1772 the young people went to live on the farm. Here they received Dr Johnson and Boswell. Shortly after, the family went to America, and in 1775 Kingsburgh joined the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. He afterwards served in Canada, and finally returned to Skye on half-pay. Flora had seven children, five sons and two daughters, the sons after the old Skye fashion becoming soldiers, and the daughters the wives of soldiers. She died in 1790, and was buried in the churchyard of Kilmuir. To the discredit of the Skye gentlemen—

in many of whom her blood flows—the grave is in a state of utter disrepair. When I saw it two or three months ago it was covered with a rank growth of nettles. These are untouched. The tourist will deface tombstones, and carry away chips from a broken bust, but a nettle the boldest or the most enthusiastic will hardly pluck and convey from even the most celebrated grave. A line must be drawn somewhere, and Vandalism draws the line at nettles—it will not sting its own fingers for the world.

O Death! O Time! O men and women of whom we have read, what eager but unavailing hands we stretch towards you! How we would hear your voices, see your faces, but note the waft-ure of your garments! With a strange feeling one paces round the ruins of the House of Corri-chatachin, thinking of the debauch held therein a hundred years ago by a dead Boswell and young Highland bloods, dead too. But the ruin of the old house of Kingsburgh moves one more than the ruin of the old house of Corrichatachin. On the shore of Loch Snizort—waters shadowed once by the sails of Haco's galleys—we stumble on the

latter ancient site. The outline of the walls is distinguished by a mere protuberance on the grassy turf; and in the space where fires burned, and little feet pattered, and men and women ate and drank, and the hospitable board smoked, great trees are growing. To this place did Flora Macdonald come and the prince—his head worth thirty thousand pounds—dressed in woman's clothes; there they rested for the night, and departed next morning. And the sheets in which the wanderer slept were carefully put aside, and years after they became the shroud for the lady of the house. And the old shoes the prince wore were kept by Kingsburgh till his dying day, and after that a "zealous Jacobite gentleman" paid twenty guineas for the treasure. That love for the young Ascanius!—the carnage of Culloden, and noble blood reddening many scaffolds, could not wash it out. Fancy *his* meditations on all that devotion when an old besotted man in Rome—the glitter of the crown of his ancestors faded utterly away out of his bleared and tipsy eyes! And when Flora was mistress of it, to the same place came Boswell, and Johnson with a cold in his head. There the doctor saluted Flora,

and snivelled his compliments, and slept in the bed the prince occupied. There Boswell was in a cordial humour, and, as his fashion was, "promoted a cheerful glass." And all these people are ghosts and less. And, as I write, the wind is rising on Loch Snizort, and through the autumn rain the yellow leaves are falling on the places where the prince and the doctor and the toady sat.

One likes to know that Pope saw Dryden sitting in the easy-chair near the fire at Will's Coffee-house, and that Scott met Burns at Adam Ferguson's. It is pleasant also to know that Doctor Johnson and Flora Macdonald met. It was like the meeting of two widely-separated eras and orders of things. Fleet Street, and the Cuchullins with Ossianic mists on their crests, came face to face. It is pleasant also to know that the sage liked the lady, and the lady liked the sage. After the departure of the prince the arrival of Dr Johnson was the next great event in Hebridean history. The doctor came, and looked about him, and went back to London and wrote his book. Thereafter there was plenty of war; and the Islesmen became soldiers, fighting in India, America,

and the Peninsula. The tartans waved through the smoke of every British battle, and there were no such desperate bayonet charges as those which rushed to the yell of the bagpipe. At the close of the last and the beginning of the present century, half the farms in Skye were rented by half-pay officers. The Army List was to the island what the Post-office Directory is to London. Then Scott came into the Highlands with the whole world of tourists at his back. Then up through Skye came Dr John M'Culloch — caustic, censorious, epigrammatic — and dire was the rage occasioned by the publication of his letters—the rage of men especially who had shown him hospitality and rendered him services, and who got their style of talk mimicked, and their household procedures laughed at for their pains. Then came evictions, emigrations, and the potato failure. Everything is getting prosaic as we approach the present time. Then my friend Mr Hutcheson established his magnificent fleet of Highland steamers. While I write the iron horse is at Dingwall, and he will soon be at Kyleakin—through which strait King Haco sailed seven centuries ago. In a couple of years or thereby Por-

tree will be distant twenty-four hours from London—that time the tourist will take in coming, that time black-faced mutton will take in going.

Wandering up and down the Western Islands, one is brought into contact with Ossian, and is launched into a sea of perplexities as to the genuineness of Macpherson's translation. That fine poems should have been composed in the Highlands so many centuries ago, and that these should have existed through that immense period of time in the memories and on the tongues of the common people, is sufficiently startling. The Border Ballads are children in their bloom compared with the hoary Ossianic legends and songs. On the other hand, the theory that Macpherson, whose literary efforts when he did not pretend to translate are extremely poor and meagre, should have, by sheer force of imagination, created poems confessedly full of fine things, with strong local colouring, not without a weird sense of remoteness, with heroes shadowy as if seen through Celtic mists: poems, too, which have been received by his countrymen as genuine, which Dr Johnson scornfully abused, and which Dr Blair enthusiastically praised;

which have been translated into every language in Europe; which Goethe and Napoleon admired; from which Carlyle has drawn his "red son of the furnace," and many a memorable sentence besides; and over which, for more than a hundred years now, there has raged a critical and philological battle, with victory inclining to neither side—that the poor Macpherson should have created these poems is, if possible, more startling than their claim of antiquity. If Macpherson created Ossian, he was an athlete who made one surprising leap and was palsied ever afterwards; a marksman who made a centre at his first shot, and who never afterwards could hit the target. It is well enough known that the Highlanders, like all half-civilised nations, had their legends and their minstrelsy; that they were fond of reciting poems and runes; and that the person who retained on his memory the greatest number of tales and songs brightened the gatherings round the ancient peat-fires as your Sydney Smith brightens the modern dinner. And it is astonishing how much legendary material a single memory may retain. In illustration, Dr Brown, in his "History of the Highlands," informs

us that "the late Captain John Macdonald of Breakish, a native of the Island of Skye, declared upon oath, at the age of seventy-eight, that he could repeat, when a boy between twelve and fifteen years of age, (about the year 1740,) from one to two hundred Gaelic poems, differing in length and in number of verses; and that he learned them from an old man about eighty years of age, who sang them for years to his father when he went to bed at night, and in the spring and winter before he rose in the morning." The late Dr Stuart, minister of Luss, knew "an old Highlander in the Isle of Skye, who repeated to him for three successive days, and during several hours each day, without hesitation, and with the utmost rapidity, many thousand lines of ancient poetry, and would have continued his repetitions much longer if the doctor had required him to do so." From such a raging torrent of song the doctor doubtless fled for his life. Without a doubt there was a vast quantity of poetic material existing in the islands. But more than this, when Macpherson, at the request of Home, Blair, and others, went to the Highlands to collect materials, he undoubtedly

received Gaelic MSS. Mr Farquharson, (Dr Brown tells us,) Prefect of Studies at Douay College in France, was the possessor of Gaelic MSS., and in 1766 he received a copy of Macpherson's "Ossian," and Mr M'Gillivray, a student there at the time, saw them (Macpherson's "Ossian" and Mr Farquharson's MSS.) frequently collated, and heard the complaint that the translations fell very far short of the energy and beauty of the originals; and the said Mr M'Gillivray was convinced that the MSS. contained all the poems translated by Macpherson, because he recollected very distinctly having heard Mr Farquharson say, after having read the translations, "that he had all these poems in his collection." Dr Johnson could never talk of the matter calmly. "Show me the original manuscripts," he would roar. "Let Mr Macpherson deposit the manuscript in one of the colleges at Aberdeen where there are people who can judge; and if the professors certify the authenticity, then there will be an end of the controversy." Macpherson, when his truthfulness was rudely called in question, wrapped himself up in proud silence, and disdained reply. At

last, however, he submitted to the test which Dr Johnson proposed. At a bookseller's shop he left for some months the originals of his translations, intimating by public advertisement that he had done so, and stating that all persons interested in the matter might call and examine them. No one, however, called; Macpherson's pride was hurt, and he became thereafter more obstinately silent and uncommunicative than ever. There needed no such mighty pother about the production of manuscripts. It might have been seen at a glance that the Ossianic poems were not forgeries—at all events that Macpherson did not forge them. Even in the English translation, to a great extent, the sentiments, the habits, the modes of thought described are entirely primeval; in reading it, we seem to breathe the morning air of the world. The personal existence of Ossian is, I suppose, as doubtful as the personal existence of Homer; and if he ever lived, he is great, like Homer, through his tributaries. Ossian drew into himself every lyrical runnel, he augmented himself in every way, he drained centuries of their songs; and living an oral and gipsy

life, handed down from generation to generation, without being committed to writing and having their outlines determinately fixed, the authorship of these songs becomes vested in a multitude, every reciter having more or less to do with it. For centuries the floating legendary material was reshaped, added to, and altered by the changing spirit and emotion of the Celt. Reading the Ossianic fragments is like visiting the skeleton of one of the South American cities; like walking through the streets of disinterred Pompeii or Herculaneum. These poems, if rude and formless, are touching and venerable as some ruin on the waste, the names of whose builders are unknown: whose towers and walls, although not erected in accordance with the lights of modern architecture, affect the spirit and fire the imagination far more than nobler and more recent piles; its chambers, now roofless to the day, were ages ago tenanted by life and death, joy and sorrow; its walls have been worn and rounded by time, its stones channelled and fretted by the fierce tears of winter rains; on broken arch and battlement every April for centuries has kindled a light of desert flowers; and it stands

muffled with ivies, bearded with mosses, and stained with lichens by the suns of forgotten summers. So these songs are in the original—strong, simple, picturesque in decay; in Mr Macpherson's English they are hybrids and mongrels. They resemble the Castle of Dunvegan, an amorphous mass of masonry of every conceivable style of architecture, in which the ninth century jostles the nineteenth.

In these poems not only do character and habit smack of the primeval time, but there is extraordinary truth of local colouring. The Iliad is roofed by the liquid softness of an Ionian sky. In the verse of Chaucer there is eternal May and the smell of newly-blossomed English hawthorn hedges. In Ossian, in like manner, the skies are cloudy, there is a tumult of waves on the shore, the wind sings in the pine. This truth of local colouring is a strong argument in proof of authenticity. I for one will never believe that Macpherson was more than a somewhat free translator. Despite Gibbon's sneer, I do "indulge the supposition that Ossian lived and Fingal sung;" and, more than this, it is my belief that

these misty phantasmal Ossianic fragments, with their car-borne heroes that come and go like clouds on the wind, their frequent apparitions, the "stars dim-twinkling through their forms," their maidens fair and pale as lunar rainbows, are, in their own literary place, worthy of every recognition. If you think these poems exaggerated, go out at Sligachan and see what wild work the pencil of moonlight makes on a mass of shifting vapour. Does *that* seem nature or a madman's dream? Look at the billowy clouds rolling off the brow of Blaavin, all golden and on fire with the rising sun! Wordsworth's verse does not more completely mirror the Lake Country than do the poems of Ossian the terrible scenery of the Isles. Grim, and fierce, and dreary as the night-wind is the strain, for not with rose and nightingale had the old bard to do; but with the thistle waving on the ruin, the upright stones that mark the burying-places of heroes, weeping female faces white as sea-foam in the moon, the breeze mourning alone in the desert, the battles and friendships of his far-off youth, and the flight of the "dark-brown years." These poems are wonderful tran-

scripts of Hebridean scenery. They are as full of mists as the Hebridean glens themselves. Ossian seeks his images in the vapoury wraiths. Take the following of two chiefs parted by their king:— "They sink from their king on either side, like two columns of morning mist when the sun rises between them on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side, each towards its reedy pool." You cannot help admiring the image; and I saw the misty circumstance this very morning when the kingly sun struck the earth with his golden spear, and the cloven mists rolled backwards to their pools like guilty things.

That a large body of poetical MSS. existed in the Highlands we know; we know also that, when challenged to do so, Macpherson produced his originals; and the question arises, Was Macpherson a competent and faithful translator of these MSS.? Did he reproduce the original in all its strength and sharpness? On the whole, perhaps Macpherson translated the ancient Highland poems as faithfully as Pope translated Homer, but his version is in many respects defective and untrue. The English Ossian is Macpherson's, just as the

most popular English Iliad is Pope's. Macpherson was not a thoroughly-equipped Gaelic scholar; his version is full of blunders and misapprehensions of meaning, and he expressed himself in the fashionable poetic verbiage of his day. You find echoes of Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, and Dryden, and these echoes give his whole performance a hybrid aspect. It has a particoloured look; is a thing of odds and ends, of shreds and patches; in it antiquity and his own day are incongruously mixed—like Macbeth in a periwig, or a ruin decked out with new and garish banners. Here is Macpherson's version of a portion of the third book of Fingal:—

"Fingal beheld the son of Starno: he remembered Agandecca. For Swaran with the tears of youth had mourned his white-bosomed sister. He sent Ullin of Songs to bid him to the feast of shells. For pleasant on Fingal's soul returned the memory of the first of his loves!

"Ullin came with aged steps, and spoke to Starno's son. 'O thou that dwellest afar, surrounded like a rock with thy waves! Come to the feast of the king, and pass the day in rest. To-

morrow let us fight, O Swaran, and break the echoing shields.' 'To-day,' said Starno's wrathful son, 'we break the echoing shields: to-morrow my feast shall be spread; but Fingal shall lie on earth.' 'To-morrow let the feast be spread,' said Fingal, with a smile. 'To-day, O my sons, we shall break the echoing shields. Ossian, stand thou near my arm. Gaul, lift thy terrible sword. Fergus, bend thy crooked yew. Throw, Fillan, thy lance through heaven. Lift your shields like the darkened moon. Be your spears the meteors of death. Follow me in the path of my fame. Equal my deeds in battle.'

"As a hundred winds on Morven; as the streams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly successive over heaven; as the dark ocean assails the shore of the desert; so roaring, so vast, so terrible the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath. The groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night when the clouds burst on Cona, and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind. Fingal rushed on in his strength, terrible as the spirit of Trenmore, when in a whirlwind he comes to Morven to see the children of

his pride. The oaks resound on their mountains, and the rocks fall down before him. Dimly seen as lightens the night, he strides largely from hill to hill. Bloody was the hand of my father when he whirled the gleam of his sword. He remembered the battles of his youth. The field is wasted in the course.

"Ryno went on like a pillar of fire. Dark is the brow of Gaul. Fergus rushed forward with feet of wind. Fillan, like the mist of the hill. Ossian, like a rock, came down. I exulted in the strength of the king. Many were the deaths of my arm! dismal the gleam of my sword! My locks were not then so gray; nor trembled my hands with age. My eyes were not closed in darkness; my feet failed not in the race.

"Who can relate the deaths of the people, who the deeds of mighty heroes, when Fingal, burning in his wrath, consumed the sons of Lochlin? Groans swelled on groans from hill to hill, till night had covered all. Pale, staring like a herd of deer, the sons of Lochlin convene on Lena."

So writes Macpherson. I subjoin a more literal and faithful rendering of the passage, in which, to

some extent, may be tasted the wild-honey flavour of the original:—

"Fingal descried the illustrious son of Starn,
And he remember'd the maiden of the snow:
When she fell, Swaran wept
For the young maid of brightest cheek.

"Ullin of songs (the bard) approach'd
To bid him to the feast upon the shore.
Sweet to the king of the great mountains
Was the remembrance of his first-loved maid.

"Ullin of the most aged step (the step of feeblest age)
came nigh,
And thus address'd the son of Starn:
'Thou from the land afar, thou brave,
Like, in thy mail and thy arms,
To a rock in the midst of the billows,
Come to the banquet of the chiefs;
Pass the day of calm in feasting;
To-morrow ye shall break the shields
In the strife where play the spears.'

"'This very day,' said the son of Starn, 'this very day
I shall break in the hill the spear;
To-morrow thy king shall be low in the dust,
And Swaran and his braves shall banquet.'

"'To-morrow let the hero feast,'
Smiling said the king of Morven;
'To-day let us fight the battle in the hill,
And break the mighty shield.
Ossian, stand thou by my side;
Gall, thou great one, lift thy hand;
Fergus, draw thy swift-speeding string;

Fillan, throw thy matchless lance ;
Lift your shields aloft
As the moon in shadow in the sky ;
Be your spears as the herald of death.
Follow, follow me in my renown ;
Be as hosts (as hundreds) in the conflict.'

"As a hundred winds in the oak of Morven ;
As a hundred streams from the steep-sided mountain ;
As clouds gathering thick and black ;
As the great ocean pouring on the shore,
So broad, roaring, dark and fierce,
Met the braves, a-fire, on Lena.
The shout of the hosts on the shoulders (bones) of the
mountains
Was as a torrent in a night of storm
When bursts the cloud on glenny Cona,
And a thousand ghosts are shrieking loud
On the viewless crooked wind of the cairns.

"Swiftly the king advanced in his might,
As the spirit of Trenmore, pitiless spectre,
When he comes in the whirl-blast of the billows
To Morven, the land of his loved sires.
The oak resounds on the mountain,
Before him falls the rock of the hills ;
Through the lightning-flash the spirit is seen—
His great steps are from cairn to cairn.

"Bloody, I ween, was my sire in the field,
When he drew with might his sword ;
The king remember'd his youth,
When he fought the combat of the glens.

"Ryno sped as the fire of the sky,
Gloomy and black was Gall, (wholly black ;)

Fergus rush'd as the wind on the mountain;
Fillan advanced as the mist on the woods;
Ossian was as a pillar of rock in the combat.
My soul exulted in the king,
Many were the deaths and dismal
'Neath the lightning of my great sword in the strife.

"My locks were not then so gray,
Nor shook my hand with age.
The light of my eye was unquench'd,
And aye unwearied in travel was my foot.

"Who will tell of the deaths of the people?
Who the deeds of the mighty chiefs?
When kindled to wrath was the king;
Lochlin was consumed on the side of the mountain.
Sound on sound rose from the hosts,
Till fell on the waves the night.
Feeble, trembling, and pale as (hunted) deer,
Lochlin gather'd on heath-clad Lena."*

To English readers the sun of Ossian shines dimly through a mist of verbiage. It is to be hoped that the mist will one day be removed—it is the bounden duty of one of Ossian's learned countrymen to remove it.

It is not to be supposed that the Ossianic legends are repeated often now around the island peat-fires; but many are told resembling in essentials those which Dr Dasent has translated to us

* For this translation I am indebted to my learned and accomplished friend the Rev. Mr Macpherson of Inverary.

from the Norse. As the northern nations have a common flora, so they have a common legendary literature. Supernaturalism belongs to their tales as the aurora borealis belongs to their skies. Those stories I have heard in Skye, and many others, springing from the same roots, I have had related to me in the Lowlands and in Ireland. They are full of witches and wizards; of great wild giants crying out, "Hiv! Haw Hoagraich! It is a drink of thy blood that quenches my thirst this night;" of wonderful castles with turrets and banqueting halls; of magic spells, and the souls of men and women dolefully imprisoned in shapes of beast and bird. As tales few of them can be considered perfect; the supernatural element is strong in many, but frequently it breaks down under some prosaic or ludicrous circumstance: the spell exhales somehow, and you care not to read further. Now and then a spiritual and ghastly imagination passes into a revolting familiarity and destroys itself. In these stories all times and conditions of life are curiously mixed, and this mixture shows the passage of the story from tongue to tongue through generations. If you discover on

the bleak Skye shore a log of wood with Indian carvings peeping through a crust of native barnacles, it needs no prophet to see that it has crossed the Atlantic. Confining your attention merely to Skye—to the place in which the log is found—the Indian carvings are an anachronism; but there is no anachronism when you arrive at the idea that the log belongs to another continent, and that it has reached its final resting-place through blowing winds and tossing waves. These old Highland stories, beginning in antiquity, and quaintly ending with a touch of the present, are lessons in the science of criticism. In a ballad the presence of an anachronism, the cropping out of a comparatively modern touch of manners or detail of dress, does not in the least invalidate the claim of the ballad to antiquity—provided it can be proved that before being committed to writing it had led an oral existence. Every ballad existing in the popular memory takes the colour of the periods through which it has lived, just as a stream takes the colour of the different soils through which it flows. The other year Mr Robert Chambers attempted to throw discredit on

the alleged antiquity of Sir Patrick Spens from the following verse:—

> "Oh, laith, laith were our guid Scots lords
> To weet their cork-heel'd shoon;
> But lang ere a' the play was o'er,
> They wat their heads abune,"—

cork-heeled shoes having been worn neither by the Scots lords, nor by the lords of any other nation, so early as the reign of Alexander III., at which period Sir Patrick Spens sailed on his disastrous voyage. But the appearance of such a comparatively modern detail of personal attire throws no discredit on the antiquity of the ballad, because in its oral transmission each singer or reciter would naturally equip the Scots lords in the particular kind of shoes which the Scots lords wore in his own day. Anachronism of this kind proves nothing, because such anachronism is involved in the very nature of the case, and must occur in every old composition which is frequently recited, and the terms of which have not been definitely fixed by writing. In the old Highland stories to which I allude, the wildest anachronisms are of the most frequent occurrence; with the most utter scorn of historical accuracy all

the periods are jumbled together; they resemble the dance on the outside stage of a booth at a country fair before the performances begin, in which the mailed crusader, King Richard III., a barmaid, and a modern "swell" meet, and mingle, and cross hands with the most perfect familiarity and absence from surprise. And some of those violations of historical accuracy are instructive enough, and throw some light on the cork-heeled shoes of the Scots lords in the ballad. In one story a mermaiden and a General in the British army are represented as in love with each other and holding clandestine meetings. Here is an anachronism with a vengeance, enough to make Mr Robert Chambers stare and gasp. How would he compute the age of that story? Would he make it as old as the mermaiden or as modern as the British General? Personally, I have not the slightest doubt that the story is old, and that in its original form it concerned itself with certain love passages between a mermaiden and a great warrior. But the story lived for generations as tradition, was told around the Skye peat-fires, and each relater gave it something of his own, some touch drawn

from contemporary life. The mermaiden remains of course, for she is *sui generis;* search nature and for her you can find no equivalent—you can't translate her into anything else. With the warrior it is entirely different; he loses spear and shield, and grows naturally into the modern General with gilded spur, scarlet coat, and cocked hat with plumes. The same sort of change, arising from the substitution of modern for ancient details, of modern equivalents for ancient facts, must go on in every song or narrative which is orally transmitted from generation to generation.

Many of these stories, even when they are imperfect in themselves, or resemble those told elsewhere, are curiously coloured by Celtic scenery and pervaded by Celtic imagination. In listening to them, one is specially impressed by a bare, desolate, woodless country; and this impression is not produced by any formal statement of fact; it arises partly from the paucity of actors in the stories, and partly from the desert spaces over which the actors travel, and partly from the number of carrion crows, and ravens, and malign hill-foxes which they encounter in their journeyings.

The "hoody," as the crow is called, hops and flits and croaks through all the stories. His black wing is seen everywhere. And it is the frequent appearance of these beasts and birds, never familiar, never domesticated, always outside the dwelling, and of evil omen when they fly or steal across the path, which gives to the stories much of their weird and direful character. The Celt has not yet subdued nature. He trembles before the unknown powers. He cannot be sportive for the fear that is in his heart. In his legends there is no merry Puck, no Ariel, no Robin Goodfellow, no half-benevolent, half-malignant Brownie even. These creatures live in imaginations more emancipated from fear. The mists blind the Celt on his perilous mountain-side, the sea is smitten white on his rocks, the wind bends and dwarfs his pine wood; and as Nature is cruel to him, and as his light and heat are gathered from the moor, and his most plenteous food from the whirlpool and the foam, we need not be surprised that few are the gracious shapes that haunt his fancy.

THE SECOND SIGHT.

THE Quirang is one of the wonderful sights of Skye, and if you once visit it you will believe ever afterwards the misty and spectral Ossian to be authentic. The Quirang is a nightmare of nature; it resembles one of Nat Lee's mad tragedies; it might be the scene of a Walpurgis night; on it might be held a Norway witch's Sabbath. Architecture is frozen music, it is said; the Quirang is frozen terror and superstition. 'Tis a huge spire or cathedral of rock some thousand feet in height, with rocky spires or needles sticking out of it. Macbeth's weird sisters stand on the blasted heath, and Quirang stands in a region as wild as itself. The country around is strange and abnormal, rising into rocky ridges here, like the spine of some huge animal, sinking into hollows there, with pools in the hollows—glimmering almost always through drifts of misty rain. On

a clear day, with a bright sun above, the ascent of Quirang may be pleasant enough; but a clear day you seldom find, for on spectral precipices and sharp-pointed rocky needles, the weeping clouds of the Atlantic have made their chosen home. When you ascend, with every ledge and block slippery, every runnel a torrent, the wind taking liberties with your cap and making your plaid stream like a meteor to the troubled air, white tormented mists boiling up from black chasms and caldrons, rain making disastrous twilight of noon-day,—horror shoots through your pulses, your brain swims on the giddy pathway, and the thought of your room in the vapoury under world rushes across the soul like the fallen Adam's remembrance of his paradise. Then you learn, if you never learned before, that nature is not always gracious; that not always does she out-stretch herself in low-lying bounteous lands, over which sober sunsets redden and heavy-uddered cattle low; but that she has fierce hysterical moods in which she congeals into granite precipice and peak, and draws around herself and her companions the winds that moan and bluster, veils of livid rains. If you are an Englishman you will

habitually know her in her gracious, if a Skye man in her fiercer, moods.

No one is independent of scenery and climate. Men are racy of the soil in which they grow, even as grapes are. A Saxon nurtured in fat Kent or Sussex, amid flats of heavy wheat and acorn-dropping oaks, must of necessity be a different creature from the Celt who gathers his sustenance from the bleak sea-board, and who is daily drenched by the rain-cloud from Cuchullin. The one, at his best, becomes a broad-shouldered, clear-eyed, ruddy-faced man, slightly obese, who meets danger gleefully, because he has had little experience of it, and because his conditions being hitherto easy, he naturally assumes that everything will go well with him;—at worst, a porker contented with his mast. The other, take him at his best, of sharper spirit, because it has been more keenly whetted on difficulty; if not more intrepid, at least more consciously so; of sadder mood habitually, but *when* happy, happier, as the gloomier the cloud the more dazzling the rainbow;—at his worst, either beaten down, subdued, and nerveless, or gaunt, suspicious, and crafty, like the belly-

pinched wolf. On the whole, the Saxon is likely to be the more sensual; the Celt the more superstitious: the Saxon will probably be prosaic, dwelling in the circle of the seen and the tangible; the Celt a poet: while the anger of the Saxon is slow and abiding, like the burning of coal; the anger of the Celt is swift and transient, like the flame that consumes the dried heather: both are superior to death when occasion comes—the Saxon from a grand obtuseness which ignores the fact; the Celt, because he has been in constant communion with it, and because he has seen, measured, and overcome it. The Celt is the most melancholy of men; he has turned everything to superstitious uses, and every object of nature, even the unreasoning dreams of sleep, are mirrors which flash back death upon him. He, the least of all men, requires to be reminded that he is mortal. The howling of his dog will do him that service.

In the stories which are told round the island peat-fires it is abundantly apparent that the Celt has not yet subdued nature. In these stories you can detect a curious subtle hostility between man and his environments; a fear of them, a want of

absolute trust in them. In these stories and songs man is not at home in the world. Nature is too strong for him; she rebukes and crushes him. The Elements, however calm and beautiful they may appear for the moment, are malign and deceitful at heart, and merely bide their time. They are like the paw of the cat—soft and velvety, but with concealed talons that scratch when least expected. And this curious relation between man and nature grows out of the climatic conditions and the forms of Hebridean life. In his usual avocations the Islesman rubs clothes with death as he would with an acquaintance. Gathering wild fowl, he hangs, like a spider on its thread, over a precipice on which the sea is beating a hundred feet beneath. In his crazy boat he adventures into whirlpool and foam. He is among the hills when the snow comes down making everything unfamiliar, and stifling the strayed wanderer. Thus death is ever near him, and that consciousness turns everything to omen. The mist creeping along the hill-side by moonlight is an apparition. In the roar of the waterfall, or the murmur of the swollen ford, he hears the water spirit calling out for the man

for whom it has waited so long. He sees death-candles burning on the sea, marking the place at which a boat will be upset by some sudden squall. He hears spectral hammers clinking in an out-house, and he knows that ghostly artificers are preparing a coffin there. Ghostly fingers tap at his window, ghostly feet are about his door; at midnight his furniture cries out as if it had seen a sight and could not restrain itself. Even his dreams are prophetic, and point ghastly issues for himself or for others. And just as there are poets who are more open to beauty than other men, and whose duty and delight it is to set forth that beauty anew; so in the Hebrides there are seers who bear the same relation to the other world that the poet bears to beauty, who are cognisant of its secrets, and who make those secrets known. The seer does not inherit his power. It comes upon him at haphazard, as genius or as personal beauty might come. He is a lonely man amongst his fellows; apparitions cross his path at noon-day; he never knows into what a ghastly something the commonest object may transform itself—the table he sits at may suddenly become the resting-place of a coffin; and the

man who laughs in his cups with him may, in the twinkling of an eye, wear a death-shroud up to his throat. He hears river voices prophesying death, and shadowy and silent funeral processions are continually defiling before him. When the seer beholds a vision his companions know it; for "the inner part of his eyelids turn so far upwards that, after the object disappears, he must draw them down with his fingers, and sometimes employs others to draw them down, which he finds to be much the easier way." From long experience of these visions, and by noticing how closely or tardily fulfilment has trodden upon their heels, the seer can extract the meaning of the apparition that flashes upon him, and predict the period of its accomplishment. Other people can make nothing of them, but *he* reads them, as the sailor in possession of the signal-book reads the signal flying at the peak of the High Admiral. These visions, it would appear, conform to rules, like everything else. If a vision be seen early in a morning, it will be accomplished in a few hours,—if at noon, it will usually be accomplished that day,—if in the evening, that night,—if after candles are lighted,

certainly that night. When a shroud is seen about a person it is a sure prognostication of death. And the period of death is estimated by the height of the shroud about the body. If it lies about the legs, death is not to be expected before the expiry of a year, and perhaps it may be deferred a few months longer. If it is seen near the head, death will occur in a few days, perhaps in a few hours. To see houses and trees in a desert place is a sign that buildings will be erected there anon. To see a spark of fire falling on the arms or breast of a person is the sign that a dead child will shortly be in the arms of those persons. To see a seat empty at the time of sitting in it is a sign of that person's death being at hand. The seers are said to be extremely temperate in habit; they are neither drunkards nor gluttons; they are not subject to convulsions nor hysterical fits; there are no madmen amongst them; nor has a seer ever been known to commit suicide.

The literature of the second sight is extremely curious. The writers have perfect faith in the examples they adduce; but their examples are far

from satisfactory. They are seldom obtained at first hand, they almost always live on hearsay; and even if everything be true, the professed fulfilment seems nothing other than a rather singular coincidence. Still these stories are devoutly believed in Skye, and it is almost as perilous to doubt the existence of a Skyeman's ghost as to doubt the existence of a Skyeman's ancestor. In "Treatises on the Second Sight," very curious tracts, compiled by Theophilus Insulanus, Rev. Mr Frazer, Mr Martin, and John Aubrey, Esq., F.R.S., and which hint that a disbelief in apparitions is tantamount to disbelief in the immortality of the soul, the following stories are related :—

"John Campbell, younger of Ardsliguish, in Ardnamorchuann, in the year 1729, returning home with Duncan Campbell, his brother, since deceased, as they drew near the house, in a plain surrounded with bushes of wood, where they intended to discharge their fusees at a mark, observed a young girl, whom they knew to be one of their domestics, crossing the plain, and having called her by name, she did not answer, but ran into the thicket. As the two brothers had been some days from

home, and willing to know what happened in their absence, the youngest, John, pursued after, but could not find her. Immediately, as they arrived at home, having acquainted their mother they saw the said girl, and called after her, but she avoided their search, and would not speak to them; upon which they were told she departed this life that same day. I had this relation from James Campbell in Girgudale, a young man of known modesty and candour, who had the story at several times from the said John Campbell."

"Mr Anderson assured me, that upon the 16th of April 1746, (being the day on which his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland obtained a glorious victory over the rebels at Culloden,) as he lay in bed with his spouse towards the dawning of the day, he heard very audibly a voice at his bed-head inquiring if he was awake; who answered he was, but then took no further notice of it. A little time thereafter, the voice repeated, with greater vehemence, if he was awake. And he answering, as formerly, he was, there was some stop, when the voice repeated louder, asking the same question, and he making the same answer,

but asking what the voice had to say ; upon which it replied, The prince is defeated, defeated, defeated ! And in less than forty-eight hours thereafter an express carried the welcome tidings of the fact into the country."

" Captain Macdonald of Castletown (allowed by all his acquaintances to be a person of consummate integrity) informed me that a Knoydart man (being on board of a vessel at anchor in the sound of the Island Oransay) went under night out of the cabin to the deck, and being missed by his company, some of them went to call him down ; but not finding him, concluded that he had dropt from the ship's side. When day came on, they got a long line furnished with hooks, (from a tenant's house close by the shore,) which having cast from the ship's side, some of the hooks got hold of his clothes, so that they got the corpse taken up. The owner of the long line told Captain Macdonald that for a quarter of a year before that accident happened, he himself and his domestics, on every calm night, would hear lamentable cries at the shore where the corpse was landed ; and not only so, but the long lines that took

up the corpse being hung on a pin in his house, all of them would hear an odd jingling of the hooks before and after going to bed, and that without any person, dog, or cat touching them; and at other times, with fire light, see the long lines covered over with lucid globules, such as are seen drop from oars rowing under night."

The foregoing are examples of the general superstitions that prevail in the islands; those that follow relate to the second sight.

"The Lady Coll informed me that one M'Lean of Knock, an elderly reputable gentleman, living on their estate, as he walked in the fields before sunset, he saw a neighbouring person, who had been sick for a long time, coming that way, accompanied by another man; and, as they drew nearer, he asked them some questions, and how far they intended to go. The first answered they were to travel forward to a village he named, and then pursued his journey with a more than ordinary pace. Next day, early in the morning, he was invited to his neighbour's interment, which surprised him much, as he had seen and spoke with him the evening before; but was told by the messenger

that came for him, the deceased person had been confined to his bed for seven weeks, and that he departed this life a little before sunset, much about the time he saw him in a vision the preceding day."

"Margaret Macleod, an honest woman advanced in years, informed me that when she was a young woman in the family of Grishornish, a dairy-maid, who daily used to herd the calves in a park close to the house, observed, at different times, a woman resembling herself in shape and attire, walking solitarily at no great distance from her; and being surprised at the apparition, to make further trial, she put the back part of her garment foremost, and anon the phantom was dressed in the same manner, which made her uneasy, believing it portended some fatal consequence to herself. In a short time thereafter she was seized with a fever, which brought her to her end; but before her sickness, and on her deathbed, declared this second sight to several."

"Neil Betton, a sober, judicious person, and elder in the session of Diurinish, informed me, as he had it from the deceased Mr Kenneth Betton, late minister in Trotternish, that a farmer in the

village of Airaidh, on the west side of the country, being towards evening to quit his work, he observed a traveller coming towards him as he stood close to the highway; and, as he knew the man, waited his coming up; but when he began to speak with him, the traveller broke off the road abruptly to the shore that was hard by; which, how soon he entered, he gave a loud cry; and, having proceeded on the shore, gave a loud cry at the middle of it, and so went on until he came to a river running through the middle of it, which he no sooner entered than he gave a third cry, and then saw him no more. On the farmer's coming home he told all that he had heard and seen to those of his household: so the story spread, until from hand to hand it came to the person's own knowledge, who, having seen the farmer afterwards, inquired of him narrowly about it, who owned and told the same as above. In less than a year thereafter, the same man, going with two more to cut wattling for creels, in Coille-na-Skiddil, he and they were drowned in the river where he heard him give the last cry."

"Some of the inhabitants of Harris sailing round the Isle of Skye, with a design to go to the

opposite mainland, were strangely surprised with an apparition of two men hanging down by the ropes that secured the mast, but could not conjecture what it meant. They pursued the voyage; but the wind turned contrary, and so forced them into Broadford, in the Isle of Skye, where they found Sir Donald Macdonald keeping a sheriff's court, and two criminals receiving sentence of death there. The ropes and masts of that very boat were made use of to hang those criminals."

Such are some of the stories laboriously gathered together and set down in perfect good faith by Theophilus Insulanus. It will be seen that they are loosely reported, are always at second or third hand, and that, if the original teller of the stories could be placed in the witness-box, a strict cross-examination would make sad havoc with him and them. But although sufficiently ridiculous and foolish in themselves, they exemplify the strange ghostly atmosphere which pervades the western islands. Every one of the people amongst whom I now live believes in apparitions and the second sight. Mr M'Ian has seen a ghost himself, but he will not willingly speak about it. A woman gifted

with the second sight dwells in one of the smoking turf huts on the shore. At night, round a precipitous rock that overhangs the sea, about a hundred yards from the house, a light was often seen to glide, and evil was apprehended. For years the patient light abode there. At last a boy, the son of one of the cotters, climbing about the rock, missed his footing, fell into the sea and was drowned, and from that hour the light was never more visible. At a ford up amongst the hills, the people tell me doleful cries have been heard at intervals for years. The stream has waited long for its victim, but I am assured that it will get it at last. That a man will yet be drowned there is an article of faith amongst the cotters. But who? I suspect *I* am regarded as the likely person. Perhaps the withered crone down in the turf hut yonder knows the features of the doomed man. This prevailing superstitious feeling takes curious possession of one somehow. You cannot live in a ghostly atmosphere without being more or less affected by it. Lying a-bed you don't like to hear the furniture of your bedroom creak. At sunset you are suspicious of the prodigious shadow that stalks alongside of you

across the gold-green fields. You become more than usually impressed by the multitudinous and unknown voices of the night. Gradually you get the idea that you and nature are alien; and it is in that feeling of alienation that superstition lives.

Father M'Crimmon and I had been out rabbit-shooting, and, tired of the sport, we sat down to rest on a grassy knoll. The ghostly island stories had taken possession of my mind, and as we sat and smoked I inquired if the priest was a believer in ghosts generally and in the second sight in particular. The gaunt, solemn-voiced, melancholy-eyed man replied that he believed in the existence of ghosts just as he believed in the existence of America—he had never seen America, he had never seen a ghost, but the existence of both he considered was amply borne out by testimony. "I know there is such a thing as the second sight," he went on, "because I have had cognisance of it myself. Six or seven years ago I was staying with my friend Mr M'Ian, as I am staying now, and just as we were sipping a tumbler of punch after dinner we heard a great uproar outside. We went out and found all the farm-servants standing on the grass

and gazing seawards. On inquiry, we learned that two brothers, M'Millan by name, who lived down at Stonefield, beyond the point yonder, fishermen by trade, and well versed in the management of a boat, had come up to the islands here to gather razor-fish for bait. When they had secured plenty of bait, they steered for home, although a stiff breeze was blowing. They kept a full sail on, and went straight on the wind. A small boy, Hector, who was employed in herding cows, was watching the boat trying to double the point. All at once he came running into the kitchen where the farm-servants were at dinner. 'Men, men,' he cried, 'come out fast; M'Millan's boat is sinking—I saw her heel over.' Of course the hinds came rushing out bareheaded, and it was the noise they made that disturbed my friend and myself at our punch. All this we gathered in less time than I have taken to tell you. We looked narrowly seaward, but no boat was to be seen. Mr M'Ian brought out his telescope, and still the sea remained perfectly blue and bare. Neither M'Ian nor his servants could be brought to believe Hector's story—they thought it extremely unlikely that on a comparatively

calm day any harm could befall such experienced sailors. It was universally agreed that the boat *had* rounded the point, and Mr M'Ian rated the herd-boy for raising a false alarm. Hector still persisting that he had seen the boat capsize and go down, got his ears soundly boxed for his obstinacy, and was sent whimpering away to his cows, and enjoined in future to mind his own business. Then the servants returned to their dinner in the kitchen, and, going back with me to our punch, which had become somewhat cold, Mr M'Ian resumed his story of the eagle that used to come down the glen in the early mornings and carry away his poultry, and told how he shot it at last and found that it measured six feet from wing-tip to wing-tip.

"But although Hector got his ears boxed it turned out that he had in all probability spoken the truth. Towards the evening of next day the M'Millan sisters came up to the house to inquire after the boat, which had never reached home. The poor girls were in a dreadful state when they were told that their brothers' boat had left the islands the previous afternoon, and what Hector the cow-herd

averred he had seen. Still there was room for hope; it was possible that Hector was mistaken, it was possible that the M'Millans might have gone somewhere, or been forced to take shelter somewhere—and so the two sisters, mustering up the best heart they could, went across the hill to Stonefield when the sun was setting, and the sea a sheet of gold leaf, and looking as it could never be angry or have the heart to drown anything.

"Days passed, and the boat never came home, nor did the brothers. It was on Friday that the M'Millans sailed away on the fresh breeze, and on the Wednesday following the bay down there was a sorry sight. The missing sailors were brave, good-looking, merry-hearted, and were liked along the whole coast; and on the Wednesday I speak of no fewer than two hundred and fifty boats were sailing slowly up and down, crossing and re-crossing, trawling for the bodies. I remember the day perfectly. It was dull and sultry, with but little sunshine; the hills over there (Blaavin and the others) were standing dimly in a smoke of heat; and on the smooth pallid sea the mournful multitude of black boats were moving slowly up and

down, across and back again. In each boat two men pulled, and the third sat in the stern with the trawling-irons. The day was perfectly still, and I could hear through the heated air the solemn pulses of the oars. The bay was black with the slowly-crawling boats. A sorry sight," said the good priest, filling his second pipe from a tobacco-pouch made of otter's skin.

"I don't know how it was," went on the Father, holding his newly-filled pipe between his forefinger and thumb; "but looking on the black dots of boats, and hearing the sound of their oars, I remembered that old Mirren, who lived in one of the turf huts yonder, had the second sight; and so I thought I would go down and see her. When I got to the hut, I met Mirren coming up from the shore with a basket full of whelks, which she had been gathering for dinner. I went into the hut along with her, and sat down. 'There's a sad business in the bay to-day,' said I. 'A sad business,' said Mirren, as she laid down her basket. 'Will they get the bodies?' Mirren shook her head. 'The bodies are not there to get; they have floated out past Rum to the main ocean.' 'How

do you know?' 'Going out to the shore about a month ago I heard a scream, and, looking up, saw a boat off the point, with two men in it, caught in a squall, and going down. When the boat sank the men still remained in it—the one entangled in the fishing-net, the other in the ropes of the sails. I saw them float out to the main sea between the two wines,'—that's a literal translation," said the Father, parenthetically. "You have seen two liquors in a glass—the one floating on the top of the other? Very well; there are two currents in the sea, and when my people wish to describe anything sinking down and floating between these two currents, they use the image of two liquors in a wine-glass. Oh, it's a fine language the Gaelic, and admirably adapted for poetical purposes,—but to return. Mirren told me that she saw the bodies float out to sea between the two wines, and that the trawling boats might trawl for ever in the bay before they would get what they wanted. When evening came, the boats returned home without having found the bodies of the drowned M'Millans. Well," and here the Father lighted his pipe, "six weeks after, a capsized boat was thrown on the shore in

Uist, with two corpses inside,—one entangled in the fishing-net, the other in the ropes of the sails. It was the M'Millans' boat, and it was the two brothers who were inside. Their faces were all eaten away by the dog-fishes; but the people who had done business with them in Uist identified them by their clothes. This I know to be true," said the Father emphatically, and shutting the door on all argument or hint of scepticism. "And now, if you are not too tired, suppose we try our luck in the copses down there? 'Twas a famous place for rabbits when I was here last year."

IN A SKYE BOTHY.

I AM quite alone here. England may have been invaded and London sacked, for aught I know. Several weeks since a newspaper, accidentally blown to my solitude, informed me that the *Great Eastern*, with the second American telegraphic cable on board, had got under way, and was about to proceed to sea. There is great joy, I perceive. Human nature stands astonished at itself—felicitates itself on its remarkable talent, and will for months to come complacently purr over its achievement in magazines and reviews. A fine world, messieurs, that will attain to heaven—if in the power of steam. A very fine world; yet for all that, I have withdrawn from it for a time, and would rather not hear of its remarkable exploits. In my present mood, I do not value them the coil of vapour on the brow of Blaavin, which, as I gaze, smoulders into nothing in the fire of sunrise.

Goethe informs us that in his youth he loved to shelter himself in the Scripture narratives from the marching and counter-marching of armies, the cannonading, fighting, and retreating, that went on everywhere around him. He shut his eyes, as it were, and a whole war-convulsed Europe wheeled away into silence and distance; and in its place, lo! the patriarchs, with their tawny tents, their man-servants and maid-servants, and countless flocks in perceptible procession whitening the Syrian plains. In this, my green solitude, I appreciate the full sweetness of the passage. Everything here is silent as the Bible plains themselves. I am cut off from former scenes and associates as by the sullen Styx and the grim ferrying of Charon's boat. The noise of the world does not touch me. I live too far inland to hear the thunder of the reef. To this place no postman comes; no tax-gatherer. This region never heard the sound of the church-going bell. The land is Pagan as when the yellow-haired Norseman landed a thousand years ago. I almost feel a Pagan myself. Not using a notched stick, I have lost all count of time, and don't know Saturday from Sunday. Civilisation is like a

soldier's stock, it makes you carry your head a good deal higher, makes the angels weep a little more at your fantastic tricks, and half suffocates you the while. I have thrown it away, and breathe freely. My bed is the heather, my mirror the stream from the hills, my comb and brush the sea breeze, my watch the sun, my theatre the sunset, and my evening service—not without a rude natural religion in it—watching the pinnacles of the hills of Cuchullin sharpening in intense purple against the pallid orange of the sky, or listening to the melancholy voices of the sea-birds and the tide; that over, I am asleep, till touched by the earliest splendour of the dawn. I am, not without reason, hugely enamoured of my vagabond existence.

My bothy is situated on the shores of one of the Lochs that intersect Skye. The coast is bare and rocky, hollowed into fantastic chambers; and when the tide is making, every cavern murmurs like a sea-shell. The land, from frequent rain, green as emerald, rises into soft pastoral heights, and about a mile inland soars suddenly up into peaks of bastard marble, white as the cloud under which

the lark sings at noon, and bathed in rosy light at sunset. In front are the Cuchullin hills and the monstrous peak of Blaavin; then the green strath runs narrowing out to sea, and the Island of Rum, with a white cloud upon it, stretches like a gigantic shadow across the entrance of the loch, and completes the scene. Twice every twenty-four hours the Atlantic tide sets in upon the hollowed shores; twice is the sea withdrawn, leaving spaces of smooth sand on which mermaids, with golden combs, might sleek alluring tresses; and black rocks, heaped with brown dulse and tangle, and lovely ocean blooms of purple and orange; and bare islets—marked at full of tide by a glimmer of pale green amid the universal sparkle—where most the sea-fowl love to congregate. To these islets, on favourable evenings, come the crows, and sit in sable parliament; business despatched, they start into air as at a gun, and stream away through the sunset to their roosting-place in the Armadale woods. The shore supplies for me the place of books and companions. Of course Blaavin and the Cuchullin hills are the chief attractions, and I never weary watching them. In the morning they

wear a great white caftan of mist; but that lifts away before noon, and they stand with all their scars and passionate torrent-lines bare to the blue heavens, with perhaps a solitary shoulder for a moment gleaming wet to the sunlight. After a while a vapour begins to steam up from their abysses, gathering itself into strange shapes, knotting and twisting itself like smoke; while above, the terrible crests are now lost, now revealed, in a stream of flying rack. In an hour a wall of rain, gray as granite, opaque as iron to the eye, stands up from sea to heaven. The loch is roughening before the wind, and the islets, black dots a second ago, are patches of roaring foam. You hear fierce sound of its coming. Anon, the lashing tempest sweeps over you, and looking behind, up the long inland glen, you can see the birch-woods and over the sides of the hills, driven on the wind, the white smoke of the rain. Though fierce as a charge of Highland bayonets these squalls are seldom of long duration, and you bless them when you creep from your shelter, for out comes the sun, and the birch-woods are twinkling, and more intensely flash the levels of the sea, and at a stroke the clouds are scattered

from the wet brow of Blaavin, and to the whole a new element has been added; the voice of the swollen stream as it rushes red over a hundred tiny cataracts, and roars river-broad into the sea, making turbid the azure. Then I have my amusements in this solitary place. The mountains are of course open, and this morning, at dawn, a roe swept past me like the wind, with its nose to the dewy ground—"tracking," they call it here. Above all, I can wander on the ebbed beach. Hogg speaks of that

> "Undefined and mingled hum,
> Voice of the desert, never dumb."

But far more than the murmuring and insecty air of the moorland does the wet *chirk-chirking* of the living shore give one the idea of crowded and multitudinous life. Did the reader ever hunt razor-fish?—not sport like tiger-hunting, I admit; yet it has its pleasures and excitements, and can kill a forenoon for an idle man agreeably. On the wet sands yonder the razor-fish are spouting like the fountains at Versailles on a *fête* day. The shy fellow sinks on discharging his watery *feu de joie*. If you are quickly after him through the sand, you

catch him, and then comes the tug of war. Address and dexterity are required. If you pull vigorously, he slips out of his sheath a "mother-naked" mollusc, and escapes. If you do your spiriting gently, you drag him up to light, a long thin case, with a white fishy bulb protruding at one end like a root. Rinse him in sea water, toss him into your basket, and plunge after another watery flash. These razor-fish are excellent eating, the people say, and when used as bait no fish that swims the ocean stream—cod, whiting, haddock, flat skate, broad-shouldered crimson bream—no, not the detested dog-fish himself, this summer swarming in every Loch and becursed by every fisherman—can keep himself off the hook, and in an hour your boat is laden with glittering spoil. Then, if you take your gun to the low islands—and you can go dry-shod at ebb of tide—you have your chance of sea-fowl. Gulls of all kinds are there, dookers and divers of every description, flocks of shy curlews, and specimens of a hundred tribes to which my limited ornithological knowledge cannot furnish a name. The solan goose yonder falls from heaven into the water like a meteor-stone.

See the solitary scart, with long narrow wing and outstretched neck, shooting towards some distant promontory. Anon, high above head, come wheeling a covey of lovely sea-swallows. You fire, one flutters down, never more to skim the horizon or to dip in the sea-sparkle. Lift it up; is it not beautiful? The wild, keen eye is closed, but you see the delicate slate-colour of the wings, and the long tail-feathers white as the creaming foam. There is a stain of blood on the breast, hardly brighter than the scarlet of its beak and feet. Lay it down, for its companions are dashing round and round, uttering harsh cries of rage and sorrow; and had you the heart, you could shoot them one by one. At ebb of tide wild-looking children, from turf cabins on the hill-side, come down to hunt shell-fish. Even now a troop is busy; how their shrill voices go the while! Old Effie I see is out to-day, quite a picturesque object, with her white cap and red shawl. With a tin can in one hand, an old reaping-hook in the other, she goes poking among the tangle. Let us see what sport she has had. She turns round at our salutation—very old, old almost as the worn rocks around. She might

have been the wife of Wordsworth's "Leech-gatherer." Her can is sprawling with brown crabs; and, opening her apron, she exhibits a large black and blue lobster—a fellow such as she alone can capture. A queer woman is Effie, and an awesome. She is familiar with ghosts and apparitions. She can relate legends that have power over the superstitious blood, and with little coaxing will sing those wild Gaelic songs of hers—of dead lights on the sea, of fishing-boats going down in squalls, of unburied bodies tossing day and night upon the gray peaks of the waves, and of girls that pray God to lay them by the sides of their drowned lovers, although for them should never rise mass nor chant, and although their flesh should be torn asunder by the wild fishes of the sea.

Rain is my enemy here; and at this writing I am suffering siege. For three days this rickety dwelling has stood assault of wind and rain. Yesterday a blast breached the door, and the tenement fluttered for a moment like an umbrella caught in a gust. All seemed lost; but the door was got closed again, heavily barred across, and the enemy foiled. An entrance, however, had been effected, and that

portion of the attacking column which I had imprisoned by my dexterous manœuvre, maddened itself into whirlwind, rushed up the chimney, scattering my turf-fire as it went, and so escaped. Since that time the windy columns have retired to the gorges of the hills, where I can hear them howl at intervals; and the only thing I am exposed to is the musketry of the rain. How viciously the small shot peppers the walls! Here must I wait till the cloudy armament breaks up. One's own mind is a dull companion in such circumstances. A Sheridan himself—wont with his wit to brighten the feast, whose mind is a phosphorescent sea, dark in its rest, but when touched giving out a flash of splendour for response—if cooped up here would be dull as a Lincolnshire fen at midnight, unenlivened by a single Jack-o'-Lantern. Books are the only refuge on a rainy day; but in Skye bothies books are rare. To me, however, the gods have proved kind—for in my sore need I found on a shelf here two volumes of the old *Monthly Review*, and I have sauntered through those dingy literary catacombs with considerable satisfaction. What a strange set of old fogies the writers are! To read

them is like conversing with the antediluvians. Their opinions have fallen into disuse long ago, and resemble to-day the rusty armour and gimcracks of an old curiosity shop. Mr Henry Rogers has written a fine essay on the "*Glory and Vanity* of Literature"—in my own thoughts, out of this dingy material before me I can frame a finer. These essays and criticisms were thought brilliant, I suppose, when they appeared last century; and authors praised therein doubtless considered themselves rather handsome flies preserved in pure critical amber for the inspection and admiration of posterity. The volumes were published, I notice, from 1790 to 1792, and exhibit a period of wonderful literary activity. Not to speak of novels, histories, travels, farces, tragedies, upwards of two hundred poems, short and long, are brought to judgment; and several of these—with their names and the names of their authors I have, during the last two days, made acquaintance for the first time—are assured of immortality. Perhaps they deserved it; but they have gone down like the steamship *President* and left no trace. On the whole, these Monthly Reviewers worked hard, and with proper spirit and

deftness. They had a proud sense of the importance of their craft, they laid down the law with great gravity, and from critical benches shook their awful wigs on offenders. How it all looks *now!* "Let us indulge ourselves with another extract," quoth one, "and contemplate once more the tear of grief before we are called upon to witness the tear of rapture." *Both* tears dried up long ago—like those that may have sparkled on a Pharaoh's cheek. Hear this other, stern as Rhadamanthus. Behold Duty steeling itself against human weakness! "It grieves us to wound a young man's feelings: but our judgment must not be biased by any plea whatsoever. Why will men apply for our opinion when they know that we cannot be silent, and that we will not lie?" Listen to this prophet in Israel, one who has not bent the knee to Baal, and say if there be not a plaintive touch of pathos in him:—"Fine words do not make fine poems. Scarcely a month passes in which we are not obliged to issue this decree. But in these days of universal heresy our decrees are no more respected than the bulls of the Bishop of Rome." Oh that men would hear, that they would incline their hearts to wisdom!

One peculiarity I have noticed—the advertisement sheets which accompanied the numbers are bound up with them, and form an integral portion of the volumes. And just as the tobacco-less man whom we met at the entrance to Glen Sligachan smoked the paper in which his roll of pigtail had been wrapped, so when I had finished the criticisms I attacked the advertisements, and found them much the more amusing reading. Might not the magazine-buyer of to-day follow the example of the unknown Islesman? Depend upon it, to the reader of the next century the advertising sheets will be more interesting than the poetry, or the essays, or the stories. The two volumes were a godsend; but at last I began to weary of the old literary churchyard in which the poet and his critic sleep in the same oblivion. When I closed the books, and placed them on their shelves, the rain peppered the walls as pertinaciously as when I took them down.

Next day it rained still. It was impossible to go out; the volumes of the *Monthly Review* were sucked oranges, and could yield no further amusement or interest. What was to be done? I took

refuge with the Muse. Certain notions had got into my brain,—certain stories had taken possession of my memory,—and these I resolved to versify and finally to dispose of. Here are "Poems Written in a Skye Bothy." The competent critic will see at a glance that they are the vilest plagiarisms,—that as throughout I have called the sky "blue" and the grass "green," I have stolen from every English poet from Chaucer downwards; he will observe also, from occasional uses of "all" and "and," that they are the merest Tennysonian echoes. But they served their purpose,—they killed for me the languor of the rainy days, which is more than they are likely to do for the critic. Here they are:—

THE WELL.

THE well gleams by a mountain road
Where travellers never come and go
From city proud, or poor abode
That frets the dusky plain below.
All silent as the mouldering lute
That in a ruin long hath lain;
All empty as a dead man's brain—
The path untrod by human foot,
That, thread-like, far away doth run
To savage peaks, whose central spire

Bids farewell to the setting sun,
Good-morrow to the morning's fire.

The country stretches out beneath
In gloom of wood and gray of heath;
The carriers' carts with mighty loads
Black dot the long white country roads;
The stationary stain of smoke
Is crown'd by spire and castle rock;
A silent line of vapoury white,
The train creeps on from shade to light;
The river journeys to the main
Throughout a vast and endless plain,
Far-shadow'd by the labouring breast
Of thunder leaning o'er the west.

A rough uneven waste of gray,
The landscape stretches day by day;
But strange the sight when evening sails
Athwart the mountains and the vales;
Furnace and forge, by daylight tame,
Uplift their restless towers of flame,
And cast a broad and angry glow
Upon the rain-cloud hanging low;
As dark and darker grows the hour,
More wild their colour, vast their power,
Till by the glare in shepherd's shed,
The mother sings her babe a-bed:
From town to town the pedlar wades
Through far-flung crimson lights and shades.

As softly fall the autumn nights
The city blossoms into lights;
Now here, now there, a sudden spark
Sputters the twilight's light-in-dark;

Afar a glimmering crescent shakes;
The gloom across the valley breaks
In glow-worms; swiftly, strangely fair,
A bridge of lamps leaps through the air,
And hangs in night; and sudden shines
The long street's splendour-fretted lines.
Intense and bright that fiery bloom
Upon the bosom of the gloom;
At length the starry clusters fail,
Afar the lustrous crescents pale,
Till all the wondrous pageant dies
In gray light of damp-dawning skies.

High stands that lonely mountain ground
Above each babbling human sound;
Yet from its place afar it sees
Night scared by angry furnaces;
The lighting up of city proud,
The brightness o'er it in the cloud.
The foolish people never seek
Wise counsel from that silent peak,
Though from its height it looks abroad
All-seeing as the eye of God,
Haunting the peasant on the down,
The workman in the busy town;
Though from the closely-curtain'd dawn
The day is by the mountain drawn—
Whether the slant lines of the rain
Fill high the brook and shake the pane;
Or noonday reapers, wearied, halt
On sheaves beneath a blinding vault,
Unshaded by a vapour's fold—
Though from that mountain summit old
The cloudy thunder breaks and rolls,
Through deep reverberating souls;

Though from it comes the angry light,
Whose forky shiver scars the sight,
And rends the shrine from floor to dome,
And leaves the gods without a home.

And ever in that under-world,
Round which the weary clouds are furl'd,
The cry of one that buys and sells,
The laughter of the bridal bells
Clear-breaking from cathedral towers ;
The pedlar whistling o'er the moors ;
The sun-burnt reapers, merry corps,
With stooks behind and grain before ;
The huntsman cheering on his hounds,
Build up one sound of many sounds.
As instruments of diverse tone,
The organ's temple-shaking groan,
Proud trumpet, cymbal's piercing cry,
Build one consummate harmony :
As smoke that drowns the city's spires,
Is fed by twice a million fires ;
As midnight draws her complex grief
From sob and wail of bough and leaf:
And on those favourable days
When earth is free from mist and haze,
And heaven is silent as an ear
Down-leaning, loving words to hear,
Stray echoes of the world are blown
Around those pinnacles of stone—
The saddest sound beneath the sun,
Earth's thousand voices blent in one.

And purely gleams the crystal well
Amid the silence terrible ;

On heaven its eye is ever wide,
At morning and at eventide ;
And as a lover in the sight
And favour of his maiden bright,
Bends till his face he proudly spies
In the clear depths of upturn'd eyes—
The mighty heaven above it bow'd,
Looks down and sees its crumbling cloud ;
Its round of summer blue immense,
Drawn in a yard's circumference,
And lingers o'er the image there,
Than its once self more purely fair.

Whence come the waters, garner'd up
So purely in that rocky cup?
They come from regions high and far,
Where blows the wind, and shines the star.
The silent dews that Heaven distils
At midnight on the lonely hills ;
The shower that plain and mountain dims,
On which the dazzling rainbow swims :
The torrents from the thunder gloom,
Let loose as by the crack of doom,
The whirling waterspout that cracks
Into a scourge of cataracts,
Are swallow'd by the thirsty ground,
And day and night without a sound,
Through banks of marl, and belts of ores,
They filter through a million pores,
Losing each foul and turbid stain :
So fed by many a trickling vein,
The well, through silent days and years,
Fills softly, like an eye with tears.

AUTUMN.

Happy Tourist, freed from London,
The planets' murmur in the *Times!*
Seated here with task work undone,
I must list the city chimes
A fortnight longer. As I gaze
On Pentland's back, where noon-day piles his
Mists and vapours: old St Giles's
Coronet in sultry haze:
A hoary ridge of ancient town
Smoke-wreathed, picturesque, and still;
Cirque of crag and templed hill,
And Arthur's lion couching down
In watch, as if the news of Flodden
Stirr'd him yet—my fancy flies
To level wastes and moors untrodden
Purpling 'neath the low-hung skies.
I see the burden'd orchards, mute and mellow:
I see the sheaves; while, girt by reaper trains,
And blurr'd by breaths of horses, through a yellow
September moonlight, roll the swaggering wanes.

While in this delicious weather
The apple ripens row on row,
I see the footsteps of the heather
Purpling ledges: to and fro
In the wind the restless swallows
Turn and twitter; on the crag
The ash, with all her scarlet berries,
Dances o'er a burn that hurries
Foamily from jag to jag:
Now it babbles over shallows
Where great scales of sunlight flicker;

Narrow'd 'gainst the bank it quicker
Runs in many a rippled ridge ;
Anon in purple pools and hollows
It slumbers : and beyond the bridge,
On which a troop of savage children clamber,
A sudden ray comes out
And scuds a startled trout
O'er golden stones, through chasms brilliant amber.
To-day one half remembers
With a sigh,
In the yellow-moon'd Septembers
Long gone by,
Many a solitary stroll
With an ever-flowing soul
When the moonbeam, falling white
On the wheat fields, was delight ;
When the whisper of the river
Was a thing to list for ever ;
When the call of lonely bird
Deeper than all music stirr'd ;
When the restless spirit shook
O'er some prophesying book,
In whose pages dwelt the hum
Of a life that was to come ;
When I, in a young man's fashion,
Long'd for some excess of passion—
Melancholy, glory, pleasure,
Heap'd up to a lover's measure ;
For some unknown experience
To unlock this mortal fence,
And let the coop'd-up spirit range
A world of wonder, sweet and strange :
And thought, O joy all joys above !
Experience would be faced like Love.
When I dream'd that youth would be
Blossom'd like an apple-tree,

The fancy in extremest age
Would dwell within the spirit sage,
Like the wall-flower on the ruin,
With its smile at Time's undoing,
Like the wall-flower on the ruin,
The brighter from the wreck it grew in.
Ah, how dearly one remembers
Memory-embalm'd Septembers!
But I start, as well I may,
I have wasted half a day.
The west is red above the sun,
And my task work unbegun.

Nature will not hold a truce
With a beauty without use:
Spring, though blithe and debonair,
Ripens plum and ripens pear.

O mellow, mellow orchard bough!
O yellow, yellow wheaten plain!
Soon will reaper wipe his brow,
Gleaner glean her latest grain,
October, like a gipsy bold,
Pick the berries in the lane,
And November, woodman old,
With fagots gather'd 'gainst the cold,
Trudge through wind and rain.

WARDIE—SPRING-TIME.

In the exuberance of hope and life,
When one is play'd on like an instrument
By passion, and plain faces are divine ;
When one holds tenure in the evening star,
We love the pensiveness of autumn air,
The songless fields, brown stubbles, hectic woods :
For as a prince may in his splendour sigh,
Because the splendours are his common wear,
Youth pines within the sameness of delight :
And the all-trying spirit, uncontent
With aught that can be fully known, beguiles
Itself with melancholy images,
Sits down at gloomy banquets, broods o'er graves,
Tries unknown sorrow's edge as curiously
(And not without a strange prophetic thrill)
As one might try a sword's, and makes itself
The Epicurus of fantastic griefs.

But when the blood chills and the years go by,
As we resemble autumn more, the more
We love the resurrection time of spring.
And spring is now around me. Snowdrops came ;
Crocuses gleam'd along the garden walk
Like footlights on the stage. But these are gone.
And now before my door the poplar burns,
A torch enkindled at an emerald fire.
The flowering currant is a rosy cloud ;
One daffodil is hooded, one full blown :
The sunny mavis from the tree top sings ;
Within the flying sunlights twinkling troops
Of chaffinches jerk here and there ; beneath
The shrubbery the blackbird runs, then flits,

With chattering cry: demure at ploughman's heel,
Within the red-drawn furrow, stalks the rook,
A pale metallic glister on his back;
And, like a singing arrow upwards shot
Far out of sight, the lark is in the blue.

This morning, when the stormy front of March
Is mask'd with June, and has as sweet a breath,
And sparrows fly with straws, and in the elms
Rooks flap and caw, then stream off to the fields,
And thence returning, flap and caw again,
I gaze in idle pleasantness of mood,
Far down upon the harbour and the sea—
The smoking steamer half-way 'cross the Firth
Shrunk to a beetle's size, the dark-brown sails
Of scatter'd fishing-boats, and still beyond,
Seen dimly through a veil of tender haze,
The coast of Fife endorsed with ancient towns,—
As quaint and strange to-day as when the queen,
In whose smile lay the headsman's glittering axe,
Beheld them from her tower of Holyrood,
And sigh'd for fruitful France, and turning, cower'd
From the lank shadow, Darnley, at her side.

Behind, the wondrous city stretches dim
With castle, spire, and column, from the line
Of wavy Pentland, to the pillar'd range
That keeps in memory the men who fell
In the great war that closed at Waterloo.
Whitely the pillars gleam against the hill,
While the light flashes by. The wondrous town,
That keeps not summer, when the summer comes,
Without her gates, but takes it to her heart!
The mighty shadow of the castle falls
At noon athwart deep gardens, roses blow
And fade in hearing of the chariot-wheel.

High-lifted capital that look'st abroad,
With the great lion couchant at thy side,
O'er fertile plains emboss'd with woods and towns;
O'er silent Leith's smoke-huddled spires and masts;
O'er unlink'd Forth, slow wandering with her isles
To ocean's azure, spreading faint and wide,
O'er which the morning comes—if but thy spires
Were dipp'd in deeper sunshine, tenderer shade,
Through bluer heavens rolled a brighter sun,
The traveller would call thee peer of Rome,
Or Florence, white-tower'd, on the mountain side.

Burns trod thy pavements with his ploughman's stoop
And genius-flaming eyes. Scott dwelt in thee,
The homeliest-featured of the demigods;
Apollo, with a deep Northumbrian burr,
And Jeffrey with his sharp-cut critic face,
And Lockhart with his antique Roman taste,
And Wilson, reckless of his splendid gifts,
As hill-side of its streams in thunder rain;
And Chalmers, with those heavy slumberous lids,
Veiling a prophet's eyes; and Miller, too,
Primeval granite amongst smooth-rubb'd men;
Of all the noble race but one remains,
Aytoun—with silver bugle at his side,
That echo'd through the gorges of romance—
Pity that 'tis so seldom at his lip!

This place is fair; but when the year hath grown
From snow-drops to the dusk auricula,
And spaces throng'd to-day with naked boughs,
Are banks of murmuring foliage, chestnut-flower'd,
Far fairer. Then, as in the summer past,
From the red village underneath the hill,
When the long daylight closes, in the hush
Comes the pathetic mirth of children's games:

Or clear sweet trebles, as two lines of girls
Advance and then retire, singing the while
Snatches of some old ballad sore decay'd,
And crumbling to no-meaning through sheer age—
A childish drama watch'd by labouring men,
In shirt-sleeves, smoking at the open doors,
With a strange sweetness stirring at their hearts.
Then when the darkness comes and voices cease,
The long-ranged brick-kilns glow, the far-stretch'd pier
Breaks out, like Aaron's rod, in buds of fire;
And with a startling suddenness the light,
That like a glow-worm slumbers on Inchkeith,
Broadens, then to a glow-worm shrinks again.
The sea is dark, but on the darker coast
Beyond, the ancient towns Queen Mary knew
Glitter, like swarms of fire-flies, here and there.
Come, Summer, from the south, and grow apace
From flower to flower, until thy prime is reach'd,
Then linger, linger, linger o'er the rose!

DANSCIACH.

Upon a ruin by the desert shore,
I sat one autumn day of utter peace,
Watching a lustrous stream of vapour pour
O'er Blaavin, fleece on fleece.

The blue frith stretch'd in front without a sail,
Huge boulders on the shore lay wreck'd and strown;
Behind arose, storm-bleach'd and lichen-pale,
Buttress and wall of stone.

And sitting on the Norseman's ruin'd stair,
While through the shining vapours downward roll'd,

A ledge of Blaavin gleam'd out, wet and bare,
I heard this story told :—

" All night the witch sang, and the castle grew
Up from the rock, with tower and turret crown'd :
All night she sang—when fell the morning dew
'Twas finish'd round and round.

" From out the morning ambers opening wide,
A galley, many-oar'd and dragon-beak'd,
Came, bearing bridegroom Sigurd, happy-eyed,
Bride Hilda, brilliant-cheek'd.

" And in the witch's castle, magic-built,
They dwelt in bridal sweetness many a year,
Till tumult rose in Norway, blood was spilt,—
Then Sigurd grasp'd his spear.

" The Islesmen murmur'd 'gainst the Norseman's tax ;
Jarl Sigurd led them—many a skull he cleft,
Ere, 'neath his fallen standard, battle-axe
Blood-painted to the heft,

" He lay at sunset propp'd up by his slain,
(Leader and kerne that he had smitten down,)
Stark, rigid ; in his haut face scorn and pain,
Fix'd in eternal frown.

" When they brought home the bloody man, the sight
Blanch'd Hilda to her hair of bounteous gold ;
That day she was a happy bride, that night
A woman gray and old.

" The dead man left his eyes beneath the brows
Of Hilda, in a child whose speech

Prattled of sword, spear, buckler, idle rows
Of galleys on the beach.

" And Hilda sang him songs of northern lands,
Weird songs of foamy wraith and roaming sail,
Songs of gaunt wolves, clear icebergs, magic brands,
Enchanted shirts of mail.

" The years built up a giant broad and grave,
With florid locks, and eyes that look'd men through ;
A passion for the long lift of the wave
From roaming sires he drew.

" Amongst the craggy islands did he rove,
And, like an eagle, took and rent his prey ;
Oft, deep with battle-spoil, his galleys clove
Homeward their joyous way.

" He towering, full-arm'd, in the van, with spear
Outstretch'd, and hair blown backward like a flame :
While to the setting sun his oarsmen rear
The glory of his name.

" Once, when the sea his battle galleys cross'd,
His mother, sickening, turn'd from summer light,
And faced death as the Norse land, clench'd with frost,
Faces the polar night.

" At length his masts came raking through the mist :
He pour'd upon the beach his wild-eyed bands :
The fierce, fond, dying woman turn'd and kiss'd
His orphan-making hands,

" And lean'd her head against his mighty breast
In pure content, well knowing so to live
One single hour was all that death could wrest
Away, or life could give ;

" And murmur'd as her dying fingers took
Farewell of cheek and brow, then fondly drown'd
Themselves in tawny hair—'I cannot brook
To sleep here under ground.

" My women through my chambers weep and wail :
I would not waste one tear-drop though I could :
When they brought home that lordly length of mail
With bold blood stain'd and glued,

" I wept out all my tears. Amongst my kind
I cannot sleep ; so upon Marsco's head,
Right in the pathway of the Norway wind,
See thou and make my bed !

" The north wind blowing on that lonely place
Will comfort me. Kiss me, my Torquil ! I
Feel the big hot tears plashing on my face.
How easy 'tis to die ! '

" The farewell-taking arms around him set
Clung closer ; and a feeble mouth was raised,
Seeking for his in darkness—ere they met
The eyeballs fix'd and glazed.

" Dearer that kiss, by pain and death forestall'd,
Than ever yet touch'd lip ! Beside the bed
The Norseman knelt till sunset, then he call'd
The dressers of the dead,

" Who, looking on her face, were daunted more
Than when she, living, flash'd indignant fires ;
For in the gathering gloom the features wore
A look that was her sire's.

" And upward to a sea-o'erstaring peak
With lamentation was the Princess borne,

And, looking northward, left with evening meek,
And fiery-shooting morn."

In this wise ran the story full of breaks :
And brooding o'er that subtle sense of death
That sighs through all our happy days, that shakes
All raptures of our breath,

Methought I saw the ancient woman bow'd
By sorrow in her witch-built home—and still
The radiant billows of autumnal cloud
Flow'd on the monstrous hill.

EDENBAIN.

YOUNG Edenbain canter'd
Across to Kilmuir,
The road was rough,
But his horse was sure.
The mighty sun taking
His splendid sea-bath,
Made golden the greenness
Of valley and strath.

He cared not for sunset,
For gold rock nor isle :
O'er his dark face their flitted
A secretive smile.
His cousin, the great
London merchant was dead,
Edenbain was his heir—
" I 'll buy lands," he said.

"Men fear death. How should I!
We live and we learn—
I' faith, death has done me
The handsomest turn.
Young, good-looking, thirty—
(Hie on, Roger, hie!)
I'll taste every pleasure
That money can buy.

"Duntulm and Dunsciach
May laugh at my birth.
Let them laugh! Father Adam
Was made out of earth.
What are worm-eaten castles
And ancestry old,
'Gainst a modern purse stuff'd
With omnipotent gold?"

He saw himself riding
To kirk and to fair,
Hats lifting, arms nudging,
"That's Edenbain there!"
He thought of each girl
He had known in his life,
Nor could fix on which sweetness
To pluck for a wife.

Home Edenbain canter'd,
With pride in his heart,
When sudden he pull'd up
His horse with a start.
The road, which was bare
As the desert before,
Was cover'd with people
A hundred and more.

'Twas a black creeping funeral ;
And Edenbain drew
His horse to the side of
The roadway. He knew
In the cart rolling past
That a coffin was laid—
But whose? the harsh outline
Was hid by a plaid.

The cart pass'd. The mourners
Came marching behind :
In front his own father,
Greyheaded, stone-blind;
And far-removed cousins,
His own stock and race,
Came after in silence,
A cloud on each face.

Together walk'd Mugstot
And fiery-soul'd Ord,
Whom six days before
He had left at his board.
Behind came the red-bearded
Sons of Tormore
With whom he was drunk
Scarce a fortnight before.

"Who is dead? Don't they know me?"
Thought young Edenbain,
With a weird terror gathering
In heart and in brain.
In a moment the black
Crawling funeral was gone,
And he sat on his horse
On the roadway alone.

"'Tis the second sight," cried he;
"'Tis strange that I miss
Myself 'mong the mourners!
Whose burial is this?
"My God! 'tis my own!"
And the blood left his heart,
As he thought of the dead man
That lay in the cart.

The sun, ere he sank in
His splendid sea-bath,
Saw Edenbain spur through
The golden-green strath.
Past a twilighted shepherd
At watch rush'd a horse,
With Edenbain dragged
At the stirrup a corse.

PEEBLES.

I LAY in my bedroom at Peebles
With my window curtains drawn,
While there stole over hill of pasture and pine
The unresplendent dawn.

And through the deep silence I listen'd,
With a pleased, half-waking heed,
To the sound which ran through the ancient town—
The shallow-brawling Tweed.

For to me 'twas a realisation
Of dream; and I felt like one

Who first sees the Alps, or the Pyramids,
World-old, in the setting sun;

First, crossing the purple Campagna,
Beholds the wonderful dome
Which a thought of Michael Angelo hung
In the golden air of Rome.

And all through the summer morning
I felt it a joy indeed
To whisper again and again to myself,
This is the voice of the Tweed.

Of Dryburgh, Melrose, and Neidpath,
Norham Castle brown and bare,
The merry sun shining on merry Carlisle,
And the Bush aboon Traquair,

I had dream'd: but most of the river,
That, glittering mile on mile,
Flow'd through my imagination,
As through Egypt flows the Nile.

Was it absolute truth, or a dreaming
That the wakeful day disowns,
That I heard something more in the stream, as it ran,
Than water breaking on stones?

Now the hoofs of a flying mosstrooper,
Now a bloodhound's bay, half caught,
The sudden blast of a hunting horn,
The burr of Walter Scott?

Who knows? But of this I am certain,
That but for the ballads and wails

That make passionate dead things, stocks and stones,
Make piteous woods and dales,

The Tweed were as poor as the Amazon,
That, for all the years it has roll'd,
Can tell but how fair was the morning red,
How sweet the evening gold.

JUBILATION OF SERGEANT M'TURK ON WITNESSING THE HIGHLAND GAMES.

INVERNESS, 1864.

HURRAH for the Highland glory!
Hurrah for the Highland fame!
For the battles of the great Montrose,
And the pass of the gallant Græme!
Hurrah for the knights and nobles
That rose up in their place,
And perill'd fame and fortune
For Charlie's bonny face!

Awa frae green Lochaber
He led his slender clans:
The rising skirl o' our bagpipes fley'd
Sir John at Prestonpans.
Ance mair we gather'd glory
In Falkirk's battle stoure,
Ere the tartans lay red-soak'd in bluid
On black Drumossie Moor.

An' when the weary time was owre,
When the head fell frae the neck,

Wolfe heard the cry, "They run, they run!"
On the heights aboon Quebec.
At Ticonderoga's fortress
We fell on sword and targe:
Hurt Moore was lifted up to see
"His Forty-second" charge.

An' aye the pipe was loudest,
An' aye the tartans flew,
The first frae bluidy Maida
To bluidier Waterloo.
We have sail'd owre many a sea, my lads,
We have fought 'neath many a sky,
And it's where the fight has hottest raged
That the tartans thickest lie.

We landed, lads, in India,
When in our bosom's core
One bitter memory burn'd like hell—
The shambles at Cawnpore.
Weel ye mind our march through the furnace-heats,
Weel ye mind the heaps of slain,
As we follow'd through his score of fights
Brave "Havèlock the Dane."

Hurrah for the Highland glory!
Hurrah for the Highland names!
God bless you, noble gentlemen!
God love you, bonny dames!
And sneer not at the brawny limbs,
And the strength of our Highland men—
When the bayonets next are levell'd,
They may all be needed then.

These verses I had no sooner copied out in my

best hand than, looking up, I found that the rain had ceased from sheer fatigue, and that great white vapours were rising up from the damp valleys. Here was release at last—the beleaguering army had raised the siege; and, better than all, pleasant as the sound of Blucher's cannon on the evening of Waterloo, I heard the sound of wheels on the boggy ground: and just when the stanched rain-clouds were burning into a sullen red at sunset, I had the M'Ians, father and son, in my bothy, and pleasant human intercourse. They came to carry me off with them.

I am to stay with Mr M'Ian to-night. A wedding has taken place up among the hills, and the whole party have been asked to make a night of it. The mighty kitchen has been cleared for the occasion; torches are stuck up, ready to be lighted; and I already hear the first mutterings of the bagpipes' storm of sound. The old gentleman wears a look of brightness and hilarity, and vows that he will lead off the first reel with the bride. Everything is prepared; and even now the bridal party are coming down the steep hill-road. I must go

out to meet them. To-morrow I return to my bothy to watch; for the weather has become fine now, the sunny mists congregating on the crests of Blaavin—Blaavin on which the level heaven seems to lean.

END OF VOLUME I.

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